

Christmas Carol
by
Dan Fiorella

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EXT. ST. MICHAEL'S RECTORY -- NIGHT

A minivan comes down the street, driven by CAROL MINELLI, a spunky, attractive soccer mom. Carol pulls up in front of the church of St. Michael's. She grabs her cake holder and hurries into the side door.

INT. CHURCH BASEMENT -- NIGHT

A general purpose room, holding a gathering of the Ladies Auxiliary, FRAN, JANE, SISSY, and OTHERS. Very important stuff is being dealt with here. Lording over the proceedings is the matriarch, grand dame MARIE MACDONALD.

Carol slips in, waves to the others. She places her cake on a table with other cakes and a coffee urn. She slides one of the other cakes to the back and puts hers up front.

FRAN

All right, so we have the cake committee in place for our October cake sale. Thank you, ladies. Okay, now, ladies, as you know, it's time to organize the Christmas pageant and this year we will be dedicating it to the memory of Eleanor Reuter---

JANE

---God rest her soul---

FRAN

---Who ran the pageant for so many years. Now, we are hoping to have someone volunteer to head-up the pageant.

MRS. MACDONALD

If I may---

FRAN

Of course, Mrs. Macdonald.

MRS. MACDONALD

Unfortunately, my many charitable duties preclude me from overseeing the pageant, but Mrs. Reuter was a good friend of mine and I just feel it is important to preserve her memory. The pageant has been a great tradition for this parish.

Carol raises her hand.

CAROL

Excuse me.

MRS. MACDONALD

I beg your pardon?

The women look nervous.

FRAN

Carol?

CAROL

Well, granted we've been doing the pageant for a lot of years.

MRS. MACDONALD

Yes?

CAROL

But I don't think it's been that great a tradition.

The women look very nervous. But you know what? Carol's right.

MRS. MACDONALD

Mrs. Minelli, how can you say that?

CAROL

I've been going to these things for years. They were a lot of empty seats last year.

MRS. MACDONALD

We're not pandering to the masses.

CAROL

Then being practical, how did we do? Jane, you're treasurer, what were the grosses?

JANE

We broke even.

Mrs. MacDonald looks triumphant.

JANE (CONT'D)

But just barely.

MRS. MACDONALD

This is not some Broadway extravaganza. We are trying to celebrate the birth of Christ.

CAROL

But it can be more than an infomercial for Christmas, I mean, the pageant has been..what's the word I'm looking for?

SISSY

Sucky?

CAROL

I was thinking "pedestrian" but sucky will do. It should be more! As a kid, Christmas was always a special time. Sure, it meant a couple of extra trips to church, but it was magical. You knew it wasn't just any old season. Schools would close. Stores would expand their toy sections. Radio stations would start playing music that totally violated their formats; when else could you hear Bing Crosby and Bruce Springsteen on the same station? TV had special shows, the post office had special stamps. Houses up and down the block would be decorated from lawn to roof. Even the weather...it could rain any old time of the year but only at Christmas could it snow. Of course, growing up, a little of the magic evaporated each year. And once I became a parent, well, then you're in charge. It's hard to enjoy the show when you're running it. I mean, it's always special, it's just never the same. So each year Christmas would come and go and I'd try to think of some way to re-capture some of my childhood wonderment and make sure I passed it on to my children. The pageant should be that.

SISSY

She's right. She's so right.

JANE

Carol, you should run the pageant.

SISSY

Yes, yes!

WOMAN 1

I nominate Carol Minelli!

SISSY

I second!

FRAN

All in favor of Carol Minelli for
pageant producer, say "aye."

ALL

(well, not MacDonald)
Aye.

FRAN

All opposed?

Silence. MacDonald thinks better of saying anything but
glares at Carol. Fran whacks her gavel.

FRAN (CONT'D)

Motion carried. Carol Minelli is
our pageant producer.
Congratulations! Meeting adjourned!

SISSY

Break a leg!

Carol is stunned by this turn of events as the ladies head
to the coffee and cake.

INT. MINELLI KITCHEN -- EVENING

Seated 'round the dinner table are Carol, her cozy husband,
DAVE, and the brood; EVE, 15, a bright, popular girl, Dave
Jr., called JOONIE, her twin, ever the boy, and the baby
LOUISE, 2 1/2 years old and proto-verbal, in her high chair.
Joonie is pretending to shove French fries up his nose and
is generally tormenting Eve as Carol serves dinner.

EVE

Gross.

Eve kicks Joonie's leg under the table.

LOUISE

That's dis-grossing.

JOONIE

Mom! She kicked me!

EVE

He made me do it! He was grossing
me out!

CAROL

That doesn't mean you can hit anyone!

DAVE

Yeah, if there's any hitting to be
done around here, I'll do it!

(to Carol)

Should I hit someone?

CAROL
Not just yet.

DAVE
Let me know.

CAROL
You bet.

EVE
You should hit him, he's gross.

CAROL
Joonie, you aren't supposed to shove
fries in your nose at the dinner
table.

DAVE
Unless requested.

JOONIE
How about string beans? They're
healthy.

CAROL
Everyone just eat.

They eat.

DAVE
Oh, I got the spot.

CAROL
Good for you.

DAVE
'Bout time, too. I never thought
we'd get it back.

JOONIE
So, mom, you gonna do it?

DAVE
Do what?

CAROL
I've been, er, asked to run the
Christmas pageant this year.

DAVE
St. Michael's Christmas pageant? We
hate the Christmas pageant. It's
lame. Year in, year out. I get a
bigger holiday rush watching those
Chia pet commercials.

CAROL

Exactly.

DAVE

What exactly?

CAROL

We can save the Christmas pageant!

JOONIE

Do we have to?

CAROL

People know it's time for a change.
The show needs to be goosed.

DAVE

I enjoy a good Christmas goose.

CAROL

And this year, Mrs. Reuter---how can
I say this...

DAVE

Retired?

CAROL

Died.

JOONIE

I heard she was killed in a freak
organ accident.

EVE

She was not!

JOONIE

That's what I heard.

DAVE

Did you accept?

CAROL

Well, I just wanted to check with
you first. It'll eat up a lot of
time.

DAVE

You want to do this?

CAROL

You know, this feels right. Yes,
it's time to give something back to
the holiday. It's time to start a
new tradition. To take charge and
not let another Christmas be defined
by shopping and eating.

EVE

But there'll still be some shopping,
right?

JOONIE

Can we be in it? And not in a
"Shepherd #5" sense?

EVE

Yeah, instead of the same old people
every single year.

CAROL

I figured I'd hold auditions. Isn't
that what they do?

JOONIE

Nah. Mrs. Reuter just handed out
the parts to the same people no matter
what.

DAVE

That goes a long way to explaining
why that high school kid played baby
Jesus.

CAROL

Well, then, I'm holding auditions.
As soon as I figure out what I'm
doing.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Kids are in bed, it's about 10 p.m. Dave is on the sofa, TV
on, but sound muted. He's scribbling away on a pad. Carol
comes downstairs and goes by Dave.

CAROL

Baby's down for the count.

She gets the remote and changes the channel.

DAVE

Hey! I was watching that.

CAROL

What was it?

DAVE

Something...manly.

CAROL

It was "Bikini Squad 3."

DAVE

There you go.

CAROL
With the sound off.

DAVE
'Nuff said.

CAROL
Why is the sound off?

DAVE
So I could work on this.

He hands her the paper.

CAROL
Scrap paper. Thank you. What is it?

DAVE
I had this tune in my head and I wanted to get it down and the stupid commercial jingle for Wendell's Ice Cream was distracting me.

CAROL
You wrote the Wendell's jingle.

DAVE
Yeah, yeah.

CAROL
It's a Christmas song. You wrote me a Christmas song?

DAVE
For your show. I wanted to get it down quick. I've had the idea for a while but never had an excuse to write it.

CAROL
That's so sweet. Somebody's looking to get their stocking stuffed big time.

DAVE
Does that mean I have to wait until December? Again?

Carol playfully slugs her.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Do you know what you're doing yet?

CAROL
Some sketches.
(MORE)

CAROL (CONT'D)
 Combining old carols with Christmas stories. Not a concert, not a play, a, a,---

DAVE
 Pageant.

CAROL
 Exactly. This is going to be so great. Thank you.

Carol punches him on the shoulder. He punches her back. Then they kiss.

EXT. RECTORY -- DAY

It's the old frame building that houses the St. Michael's rectory, next door to the church, which is beside the parish school building and gym/auditorium. Carol pulls up and goes up. She knocks. FATHER RON answers. He's a middle-aging man, balding, but cross-combing.

FATHER RON
 Mrs. Minelli, so good to see you.

CAROL
 How's it going, Father?

He leads her in.

INT. PARLOR -- CONTINUOUS

Nicely furnished room. Religious icons share the space with Broadway souvenirs.

FATHER RON
 Looking up, now. So, you've volunteered to direct this year's pageant?

CAROL
 So it seems. Anyway, I had some ideas I wanted to run by you before I get going on this.

FATHER RON
 Run away.

CAROL
 For starters, I want to hold auditions for the show so I'll need the auditorium.

FATHER RON
 Auditions?

(MORE)

FATHER RON (CONT'D)

But we have the ladies and gentlemen
that have always played those roles.

CAROL

Well, that's another thing. I want
to, er, revamp the show.

FATHER RON

Revamp?

CAROL

Maybe revamp isn't the right word.
Lose. I want to lose the show

FATHER RON

What do you mean?

CAROL

I want to produce a whole new show.
I want to get a lot of new blood,
fresh ideas, music, songs. My husband
already wrote us a new song. He's
in advertising, you know.

FATHER RON

But the show is a tradition.

CAROL

I'm not certain that expanding "'Twas
The Night Before Christmas" to a 90
minute play was a good move in the
first place.

FATHER RON

The dancing sugar plums always got
applause.

CAROL

I really, really, really think it's
time for a change, Father.

FATHER RON

Perhaps you're right. It was Mrs.
Reuter's show---

BOTH

God rest her soul.

FATHER RON

And perhaps it should be retired.
Of course, she was the musical
director as well, so if you're going
to use the organ---

CAROL

Organ, okay, so I wanted to bring in someone to do the music. I have a friend that plays...if that's agreeable.

FATHER RON

By golly, it is. I feel very excited by this talk. Very excited. Let's do it then. Please keep me posted.

CAROL

Naturally.

INSERT:

St. Michael's church bulletin, featuring the notice for "Auditions for this year's Christmas pageant."

It gets crumbled up.

EXT. ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH -- DAY

Sunday Mass is letting out. It's a beautiful autumn day. Dave, Carol and kids walk out. They are approached by Mrs. Macdonald. Also in tow is MARY, her precocious 13-year old granddaughter.

MRS. MACDONALD

Mrs. Minelli.

CAROL

Hello, Mrs. MacDonald.

MRS. MACDONALD

What is this about "open auditions" for this year's pageant?

CAROL

I'm just trying to give everyone a shot at it.

MRS. MACDONALD

You are, of course, aware that there are a number of people who are already familiar with the show.

CAROL

That's not possible. I haven't finished writing it yet.

MRS. MACDONALD

What? You're not doing Mrs. Reuter's pageant?

CAROL

Aah, no.

DAVE

(aside)

Want me to rough her up? I think I can take her.

CAROL

You see, well---

DAVE

They buried all copies of it with her.

MRS. MACDONALD

What?

CAROL

Apparently, it was her last wish.

Dave, stifling a laugh, shoos the children to the minivan.

CAROL (CONT'D)

Hadn't you heard? So, we're starting from scratch. By all means, please audition.

MRS. MACDONALD

Not for me. My granddaughter, Mary, was looking forward to performing.

CAROL

Make sure her audition highlights her strengths as a performer.

Mrs. Macdonald leaves. Mary hangs back a moment, sizing Carol up, then leaves. Carol gets in the car.

INT. MINIVAN -- DAY

EVE

Mary's strengths as a performer are being spoiled.

DAVE

So, that was Mrs. MacDonald, eh?

CAROL

Yes. The parish matriarch.

DAVE

So, she's like your matri-arch enemy.

CAROL

No, not yet.

JOONIE

They named the gym after her husband before he died.

DAVE
 His name was Jim MacDonald? Ha!
 That's pretty funny. Someone should
 right that down.

EVE
 Mrs. MacDonald has got a lot of pull
 around here.

DAVE
 A lot of push, too.

INT. MINELLI KITCHEN -- DAY

Carol at kitchen table, with shoe boxes and pads, trying to design stages.

INT. MINELLI DEN -- NIGHT

Carol at PC, typing away, pencil behind her ear, jotting stuff on a note pad.

INT. MINIVAN -- DAY

Carol is at a red light. Suddenly she's inspired, pulls out a pad and starts writing until the cars behind start beeping after the light turns green.

EXT. MINELLI HOUSE -- DAY

Halloween. There's trick-or-treaters up and down the block.

INT. GARAGE -- DAY

Joonie and his band mates, JOE, HARRY and LARS are setting up their equipment; Joe on guitar, Harry, bass and Lars at drums. Their small friend JOHN, dressed as a zombie, sits on a speaker, holding a tambourine.

JOHN
 Why'd you start the band, Davey?

JOONIE
 I don't know. It's hard to explain.
 It's something I had to do.

JOHN
 You mean somebody made you?

JOONIE
 No.

DOORBELL. Harry hits a switch and the garage door opens. Joe holds out a bowl of candy and a GROUP OF KIDS come over and take some.

JOONIE (CONT'D)

Okay, it's, well, like, why do you collect truck numbers?

JOE

What's he collect?

JOONIE

Truck numbers.

JOHN

(takes out pad)

Yeah, the numbers that trucks have painted on them. Buses, too. It's on their sides. With a circle around them. I write them down in my pad when I see them.

HARRY

Why?

JOHN

I dunno. It's something I always saw and I thought I should keep track of it. So I write them down and try to put them in order.

JOE

Why?

JOHN

Just because. Like figuring a puzzle.

JOONIE

That's what it's like with me and my music.

JOHN

Really?

JOONIE

Sure. Like the music is in here
(points to self)
And it has to get out.

DOORBELL. Harry raises the garage door again.

JOONIE (CONT'D)

I couldn't not do it.

JOHN

Wow.

(to guys)

Why'd you join the band?

JOE

To meet babes.

HARRY

Yeah. And girls, too.

JOONIE

Different strokes. Fortunately they play well.

DOORBELL.

JOE

Oh, man, this stinks, Davey.

JOONIE

My mom said we can use the house if we do the candy and make sure the house doesn't get T.P.-ed.

JOHN

Yeah. You are good. And I'm not saying that because I'm your roadie.

JOONIE

Okay, guys, let's try number 19.

As they begin playing, Eve comes in carrying some bags of candy. Joe, Harry and Lars stop playing. They are all smitten with her.

EVE

Don't stop on my account.

HARRY

No, we just didn't want to sound over-rehearsed.

EVE

That doesn't appear to be a problem, guys.

JOONIE

What are you doing here?

EVE

Seeing if you need more candy. What are you doing?

JOONIE

Rehearsing.

EVE

For what?

JOONIE

For to get better. I mean, to improve our sound.

EVE

Then what?

HARRY

We want to be ready for the battle of the bands. They're going to be auditioning for bands for the school dances.

JOE

Yeah. So, like, will you be going to any of the dances?

EVE

Probably.

This is encouraging.

JOE

Will you be looking to go with anyone?

EVE

Maybe.

JOE & HARRY

Excellent.

They high five.

JOHN

So, are you trying out for the Christmas show? You could be in a Christmas show.

JOONIE

Oh, sure. We're doing it. And not for nothing, but my mom's running this thing...we're a lock.

EXT. MINELLI HOUSE -- MORNING

Carol and Dave are both leaving the house. They kiss. Carol gets the minivan in the driveway. Dave goes to his Beetle parked at the curb. They both drive away. As soon as they're out of sight a sedan with tinted windows pulls into the parking spot in front of the house and parks.

EXT. SCHOOL -- DAY

Kids are just being released for the day. Carol comes walking up to the front door. SHELLY BERNSTEIN, contemporary music teacher, exits. They exchange greetings.

CAROL

Shelly!

SHELLY
Hi, Carol! What brings you to P.S.
53?

CAROL
Need a favor.

SHELLY
Favor? Do I know you?

CAROL
Ho and ho. I'm producing this year's
Christmas pageant at St. Michael's.
I need a musical director.

SHELLY
Carol, I'm Jewish.

CAROL
So? You're also the top pianist I
know.

SHELLY
I'm the only pianist you know.

CAROL
Yes, I have to broaden my circles.

SHELLY
Thanks. So, what are we talking
here?

CAROL
I want to do a show that says
"Christmas" with a capital "C." I
want songs, music. I want carols
and dancing.

She pulls out a thick script in a binder.

SHELLY
You want editing.

CAROL
Too much?

SHELLY
We can streamline.

CAROL
We? You'll do it?

SHELLY
Sure, it'll be good to get that out
of my system. The school just
announced it's Winter Sing.

(MORE)

SHELLY (CONT'D)

Several choruses of "Jingle Bells"
and some selections from "Fiddler on
the Roof."

CAROL

That always decked my halls. You
don't mind doing a Christmas show?

SHELLY

What's to mind? All those songs,
cards and fuss for the best known
Jew in the world. Why not?

CAROL

Exactly, why not!

SHELLY

Great.

CAROL

People are lining up to audition,
even as we speak.

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM -- EVENING

Room is dark. There's a lone spotlight on stage. Shelly is
at the piano in the "orchestra pit." Carol in the audience
seats. All very "A Chorus Line."

CAROL

Welcome everyone. Thank you for
coming. As you saw in the church
bulletin, we are auditioning for a
musical pageant and appreciate
anything you've prepared. Now, first
up.

BINGLE, a middle-aged, dapper-looking crooner, steps into
spotlight.

BINGLE

Salutations! Dan Bingle here. I'd
like to perform my number for you if
I may. It's from "Fiddler on the
Roof."

(singing ala Bing
Crosby)

"If I was a rich man, bub-bub-bub-
bub-bub-bub-bub-boo. All day long
I'd beety-beety bum, if I was a
wealthy man---"

CAROL

Thank you.

He leaves the spot.

CAROL (CONT'D)

Next.

ROD MCTOAD, a lounge lizard, steps up.

ROD

Hey, boss, nice set up you got here.
Love it.

CAROL

Thank you. And you are?

ROD

Rod McToad, actor extordinaire. I'd like to do a scene from "A Chorus Line." <ahem> Hey, babe, come to these auditions often? What sign are you? Love your tote bag---

CAROL

Next.

Rod steps out, BETTY ARIA, a diva with a violin, steps in.

BETTY

Hello? Yes, I'm Elizabeth Aria. Classically trained. I'd like to audition with Shubert's "Unfinished Symphony."

She plays several bars, then stops.

CAROL

Yes, yes, continue.

BETTY

Continue what? Hello! That's it. I told you it's "the *Unfinished* Symphony."

CAROL

Thank you. Next.

Black out. Spot up on Eve.

EVE

Hi, mom.

CAROL

No, no, I'm not your mother. I'm the director. I'm an impartial judge of talent right now. You'll be judged the same as everyone else.

EVE

Okay, I get it.

(MORE)

EVE (CONT'D)
I thought, since this is a Christmas
show, I'd sing a Christmas carol.

CAROL
Go right ahead.

Eve sings ("What Child is This" maybe?) and does so
beautifully. When she finishes, Carol is up there and hugs
her.

CAROL (CONT'D)
Oh, that was lovely, dear, just
lovely. I'm putting a big check
right next to your name. Thank you,
honey, thank you.

She kisses Eve and Eve walks off. Carol then notices the
OTHERS waiting in the wings for their turn to audition.
They looked a bit peeved.

Carol composes herself.

CAROL (CONT'D)
Next.

And she heads back to her seat.

EXT. MINELLI HOUSE -- EVENING

Dave drives toward the house. The sedan is in his parking
spot in front of the house. Dave has to drive by. Other
spots are far and few between; other cars, driveways,
hydrants. Dave has to finally park down the block and walk
back to the house, muttering all the way, glaring daggers at
the sedan.

INT. KITCHEN -- EVENING

Shelly and Carol are shuffling papers on the table. Dave
walks in. Carol realizes the time and leaps up to start
cooking.

DAVE
Did I come at a bad time?

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM -- EVENING

Again, the room is dark. There's a lone spotlight on stage.
Shelly at the piano, Carol in the audience.

CAROL
Next.

Spot light on WILLIAM ROBBINS, a hip, manic comedian type.

ROBBINS

William Robbins reporting for ditties,
sir. Hello? Anyone out there?

CAROL

I'm here.

ROBBINS

Oh, Mr. Oz, I'd like a brain, my
friend here will have a heart and
she'll take the tuna melt and an
order of fries! Ha! What? I was
just following orders. Oh, cold
shoulder. There's no place like
Nome...

CAROL

Are you here to audition?

ROBBINS

Oh, yes please. I'd like to do a
number from a musical I wrote called
East Side Story.

(singing)

"When you're a Jew, you're a Jew all
the way, from you first yarmulke to
your last oy-vey!

CAROL

Next.

Black out. Spot light up on Joonie and the band.

JOONIE

Hi. I'm Dave Minelli Jr. and this
is the band.

CAROL

What's the name of the band?

JOE

Huh?

CAROL

The band, what is its name?

HARRY

Man, I didn't think we'd be
disqualified so early in the process.

JOE

Quick, call for a do-over!

CAROL

Why don't you just play something?

JOONIE

We can do that.

And play they do.

EXT. HARDWARE STORE -- AFTERNOON

Carol enters, then exits with all manner of tools.

EXT. PAINT STORE -- AFTERNOON

Carol enters, exits with cans of paint.

EXT. LUMBER STORE -- AFTERNOON

Carol enters/exits with SHOP EMPLOYEE carrying much wood.

INT. RECTORY OFFICE -- DAY

Fr. Ron is adding up the bills. He looks concerned.

EXT. MINELLI HOUSE -- EVENING

The spot in front of the house is open and Dave quickly pulls in.

DAVE

Okay! We got the spot! Cheers for us!

INT. DAVE'S BEETLE -- CONTINUOUS

He's got Eve in the car and does a little victory sitting-dance. He tries to get a high five from Eve. She's not impressed and gets out.

EXT. MINELLI HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Just then the sedan drives by slowly. The tinted windows make it impossible to see who (if anyone) is driving.

This unnerves Dave a bit.

EVE

Who is that?

DAVE

My arch nemesis.

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM -- EVENING

Back again: Room is dark. There's a lone spotlight on stage. Shelly is at the piano, Carol in the audience seats.

CAROL

Next.

Black out. Spot comes up on PETER, a folk singer with guitar.

PETER

Hello. I'm Peter Paul Murray,
troubadour. And I'd like to do my
number for you---

(singing)

If I had a hammer, I'd hammer in the
morning, I'd hammer in the evening,
all over this land. If I had a chain
saw, I'd chain saw in the morning,
I'd chain saw in the..

CAROL

Thank you. Next.

PETER

If I had a power drill---

CAROL

Next!

Black out. Spotlight up. BUFORD, a country bumpkin, steps
in.

BUFORD

Howdy, the name's Buford Simkins.
I'd sure be mighty pleased to try
out for your show here. I'd like to
sing a little something from "Fiddler
on the Roof."

CAROL

Go ahead.

BUFORD

Yeee-Ha! Yeee-Ha! To life. To
life, to life, Yeeeh-ha!

CAROL

Thank you.

Black out.

CAROL (CONT'D)

Next.

MOBSTER steps into spotlight with a LITTLE GIRL in a dance
recital costume.

MOBSTER

Yo, my name is...well, my name's not
important. But little Lisa here is
the best dancer in the Linguini School
of Dance. Wait'll you see her
routine.

CAROL

Go ahead.

Music starts. Lisa just stands there.

MOBSTER

Go on, Lisa, honey, Show the nice
people how you dance. Come on, dance
for them. Please. I said dance.

Mobster pulls a guns and starts shooting at Lisa's feet and she dances.

INT. BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Carol bolts awake. She's in her bed. Dave is startled wake beside her.

DAVE

What is it?

CAROL

These auditions are starting to get
to me.

INT. DAVE'S OFFICE -- DAY

The cluttered creative lair of Dave's job at Winsome Advertising. There are action figures on the PC monitor, story boards tacked to the wall, an electric keyboard on the desk next to the PC keyboard. Dave is going through his desk, pulling stuff out of a drawer; a skull, a rubber chicken, a rubber foot, a fright wig, a string of Christmas lights. HARVEY, a co-worker, comes in.

HARVEY

Dave! Dave!

DAVE

Present. What?

HARVEY

They just came in with the demo reel.

DAVE

For what?

HARVEY

That new Charlie Brown parody. The boys in animation got to put it together for the comedy channel. C'mon, they just finished doing the voice work.

Dave follows Harvey out.

INT. SCREENING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

It's dark. It's a small theater set-up, with a couple of people already seated. Dave and Harvey hustle in to take a seat. The big screen TV at the front of the room comes on. A title card comes up. A jazz score plays.

ANNOUNCER(O.S)

Join us later tonight for a new,
grown-up Peanuts holiday special..."A
Charlie Brown Mid-Life Christmas."

ANIMATION SEQUENCE

EXT. LANDSCAPE -- EVENING

An adult CHARLIE BROWN and adult LINUS VAN PELT get off a bus and walk along the snow-covered ground.

LINUS

What's the matter, Charlie Brown?
You don't look very merry this
Christmas.

CHARLIE BROWN

I don't feel very merry, Linus. I
just got laid off at work.

LINUS

That's too bad, Charlie Brown.

CHARLIE BROWN

My boss said they had to shore-up
their fourth quarter profits. I was
expecting a bonus. Instead they
laid me off. Rats.

They reach a wall and lean on top of it.

LINUS

We are in a recession, Charlie Brown.

CHARLIE BROWN

My life is a recession, Linus.

LINUS

Of all the Charlie Browns in the
world, you're the most in need of
therapy.

CHARLIE BROWN

I'd better get home. I'll see you
tomorrow, Linus.

INT. BROWN HOUSEHOLD -- LATER

Charlie Brown walks into the house.

CHARLIE BROWN

Lucy, I'm home!

Adult Lucy comes out, wearing an apron and carrying a rolling pin.

LUCY

Charlie Brown, you block head! I just heard from Peppermint Patty. You got fired!

CHARLIE BROWN

No, I didn't get fired. I was downsized.

LUCY

What did you do wrong?

CHARLIE BROWN

I didn't do anything wrong. The company is in an economic down turn.

LUCY

I'll bet they fired you because you're so wishy-washy.

CHARLIE BROWN

No, they eliminated my entire department.

LUCY

Yeah, the Wishy-washy department.

Charlie starts to bend and look around.

CHARLIE BROWN

Hey, where's Snoopy?

LUCY

That stupid dog. He was like 100 years old.

CHARLIE BROWN

So?

LUCY

I had him put down.

CHARLIE BROWN

Oh, good grief. Why did you do that? He was my best friend.

LUCY

Do you know how pathetic you sound saying that? Besides, the dog tried to sue you five times.

CHARLIE BROWN

We settled.

LUCY

I don't know why I married you. I should have married Schroeder. He tours the world as a concert pianist.

CHARLIE BROWN

He tours the world to avoid you.

EXT. BROWN LAWN -- CONTINUOUS

We see Charlie and Lucy through the window. The lawn is trampled with bare hooks and wire hanging on the walls and trees. Charlie comes to the window.

LUCY

Someone stole all our lawn decorations. Not that they were worth the effort. Especially that ratty old tree!

CHARLIE BROWN

I can't stand it!

INT. BROWN HOUSEHOLD -- CONTINUOUS

Charlie's arms go up in exasperation.

CHARLIE BROWN

What happened to Christmas? What is going wrong? Where is the magic of Christmas? Where is the meaning? Does anyone know what Christmas is all about?

There's a door knock. Linus comes in.

CHARLIE BROWN (CONT'D)

Hello, Linus.

LINUS

I know what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown. Ahem.

The room goes dark and a spotlight hits Linus.

LINUS (CONT'D)

"Virginia, your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except what they see. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds.

(MORE)

LINUS (CONT'D)

All minds, Virginia, whether they be men's or children's, are little."

The lights come back on. Charlie and Lucy blankly stare at Linus a moment.

CHARLIE BROWN

That's the wrong speech, Linus---

LINUS

Oh, right, hmm... "'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse---"

CHARLIE BROWN

That's not it.

LINUS

Oh. "And the Grinch puzzled three hours, till his puzzler was sore---"

CHARLIE BROWN

'Fraid not.

LINUS

"Every time a bell rings, an angel gets his wings."

CHARLIE BROWN

You're losing it, Linus. Seriously. I mean it.

LINUS

Man, this stuff used to be second nature to me. I'm really off my game.

The door opens and Adult PIGPEN walks in. He's in a suit and a cloud of dust follows him.

PIGPEN

What's going on here?

LUCY

Pigpen? What are you doing here?

CHARLIE BROWN

He's my boss now.

PIGPEN

I've come to hire you back, Charlie Brown!

(MORE)

PIGPEN (CONT'D)

My company just got 200 million
dollars from the government as part
of an economic stimulus package! We
can hire everyone back and give the
Board of Directors a big bonus!
Merry Christmas, Charlie Brown!

They all throw back their heads and sing "Hark the Herald
Angels Sing."

End animation.

INT. SCREENING ROOM -- DAY

The group applauds and laughs as the lights come up. The TV
screen goes blue.

DAVE

It's not your father's Peanuts
special.

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM -- EVENING

Last round of auditions: The room is dark then the spotlight
comes up on a MIME, who looks startled. He gets composed:

MIME

How do you do. I'm Harold Shuster.
I'm a mime---

CAROL

Excuse me, maybe you didn't
understand, we're auditioning for a
pageant here. We really don't want
a mime...

MIME

You see, that's just it. Pantomime
is a completely misunderstood art
form. You never gave it a chance.
It is a noble art. Please, let me
show you.

CAROL

Fine, fine, go ahead.

MIME

Thank you. I'd like to do a piece I
call, "Man in the Box."

(miming as he speaks)

You see, I'm walking along the street
one day. When suddenly, I bump into
a wall. I'm amazed. I turn to walk
around and lo and behold, I bump
into another wall.

(MORE)

MIME (CONT'D)

Suddenly, I realize there are walls
all around me. And now what? Oh
no! The walls are closing in---

CAROL

Excuse me. Aren't mines supposed to
be quiet?

MIME

What?

CAROL

Mimes...They're not supposed to talk.

MIME

Well how the blazes are you supposed
to understand what I'm doing? I got
no props, I got no fancy set or
costumes---

CAROL

Next!

Black out. Spot up on MARY.

MARY

Hello? Hello. My name is Mary
Francis. I think, before I begin my
number, you should know I've worked
really hard at this, harder than
most because I suffer from that
dreaded learning disorder, dyslexia.

CAROL

Please, do your number.

MARY

(Singing)

Sunset, sunrise, sunset, sunrise,
Quickly the days go---

Black out.

FADE IN:

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM -- LATER

Shelly and Carol commiserate at the piano.

SHELLY

Wow. What a talentless burg we live
in. Is that everyone?

CAROL

Yes.

SHELLY

Maybe we need to move to a bigger town.

CAROL

If I screw up we may have to.

INT. MUSIC ROOM -- NIGHT

Shelly and Carol at piano, composing.

INT. SCHOOL -- DAY

Eve with her friends, SALLY, DONNA and JANET.

SALLY

So, Eve, your mom pick yet?

EVE

Not yet, Sally.

DONNA

But she told you who's in it, right?

EVE

No, Donna. Not a word.

JANET

You know you'll be.

EVE

I did do good.

DONNA

Of course you did good. You don't get the solos in the school chorus for nothing, you know.

SALLY

Janet, did you try out?

JANET

I can't sing. But I heard they'll be doing drama, so I might try that.

Mary MacDonald walks over.

MARY

Oh, has the losers club been called to order?

JANET

We're not losers.

MARY

No, you just play one on TV.

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

Just so you don't get your hopes too high, I've already auditioned for the pageant, and, as they say, talent will out.

EVE

Of course you're guaranteed a slot what with your grandmother and Mrs. Reuter being so close. Oh, wait, that's right, Mrs. Reuter is dead. You're in the same boat as us.

MARY

If I were in the same boat as you, you'd all be rowing. Even your mother can recognize my gift.

EVE

What? Did you try out for the role of the Christmas ham?

Mary stomps off.

DONNA

Man, what a pill.

JANET

Yeah, a Christmas pill!

SALLY

Well, see now, Janet, that doesn't even make sense.

JANET

Sorry.

INT. MINELLI'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

The TV is on as the commercial kicks in for Sid's Swim Center. It's SID in a ratty Santa Claus suit with fake snow falling. He's standing in front of his pool supply store. Christmas music plays.

SID

(stiffly, New Yawk
accent)

Ho-ho-ho. So Christmas is here again and you feel like taking your traditional Christmas swim. Where can you go to get the best in swimming pools, filters, ice breakers and stuff like that? At those other pool centers? Heck, no!

(MORE)

SID (CONT'D)

They're too busy selling Christmas trees and giant plastic candles and stuff like that. But not us! At Sid's Swim Center you won't walk in looking for a pool and leave with a holly wreath or mistletoe or stuff like that. We're open all year round and pools are our business, our only business. That's why we can charge exorbitant prices. That's right, exorbitant! On just about everything you need for your pool. Stuff like chlorine, algacide, ladders, slides, water, thermal bathing suits and stuff like that. Get a load of this week's special: Buy our Barrow's Deluxe full-size water wheel now and get this inflatable Santa life-preserver absolutely free! It sure makes a swell gift for the kiddies. Ho-ho-ho. At Sid's Swim Center we get the most of your money. I oughta know, 'cause I'm Sid! So get into the holiday swim and come on down. Ho-ho-ho!

(pause)

How was that?

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Sid's Swim Center, with one convenient location. Remember, pools make a great stocking stuffer! And you'll get yours at Sid's.

(quickly)

Swim Center. Sid's Swim Center is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Polar Bear Club.

Joonie, Carol and Eve stare at the TV.

CAROL

'Tis the season.

EXT. RECTORY -- DAY

Mrs. MacDonald is at the front door, waiting. Fr. Ron answers. Mrs. MacDonald is off and running at the mouth.

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM -- NIGHT

Carol is seated in the audience chairs. She is scribbling away in her binder. Father Ron enters.

FATHER RON

Mrs. Minelli.

CAROL

Hi, Father.

FATHER RON

So, how go the auditions?

CAROL

They go...but they keep coming back.

FATHER RON

Mrs. MacDonald was over to see me.

CAROL

Oh, really. Her granddaughter, Mary, auditioned.

(checking clipboard)

Yeah. She was pretty good.

FATHER RON

Will she be in it?

CAROL

Well, Father, we still have to sort through all the people.

FATHER RON

Mrs. MacDonald saw the auditions.

CAROL

Mary will be in it.

FATHER RON

She's very worried about the show. She doesn't like the way you're spitting in the face of tradition.

CAROL

I'm not spitting. There's no spitting. No salvia involved in any way.

FATHER RON

She's worried that it will be an embarrassment to the parish.

CAROL

She said that? It's way too early to tell. I mean, it'll be new and exciting. A real boost to the community. We just can't sit here twiddling our thumbs while those Fundamentalists steal our audience with their "Christmas Celebration!"

FATHER RON

Yeah, they always take a bite out of our audience.

CAROL

So this year showmanship is the word.
We'll have a show that'll have them
packed to the rafters. An
extravaganza that will lift the spirit
and get the soul to humming! Just
imagine an audition filled with people
of all denominations, enthralled by
the work of St. Michael's parish.
Impressed and wowed.

FATHER RON

If only we could touch them, show
them our worth. Delight them and
raise them up, all while spreading
the good news.

CAROL

Exactly.

FATHER RON

Go to it, Mrs. Minelli, do the Lord's
work!

CAROL

You bet, Father.

Father exits. Carol gulps.

INT. MINELLI KITCHEN -- DAY

Carol enters through the back door, carrying Louise. She
goes to the cupboard and pulls out a box of spaghetti. She
starts boiling some water. Goes to the freezer and pulls
out a freezer bag of frozen sauce. Eve follows in.

EVE

Hey, mom, hungry!

Carol hands Louise off to Eve.

CAROL

Gravy's made, just has to be thawed.
Spagetti'll be done in a minute.

LOUISE

S'getties!

EVE

That'll do.

Dave enters.

DAVE

I can't believe I had to park all
the way down the stupid block. I
hate this!

Eve hands off Louise to Dave.

CAROL

Oh, Dave, Shelly's been arranging your song. It's wonderful. Thank you so much.

DAVE

What can I say, I'm a sucker for Christmas.

CAROL

I started working out a rehearsal schedule. I'm going to need you home to watch Louise in the evening.

DAVE

Oh, well, sure, if nothing comes up at work.

The phone rings. Carol picks it up as the others start to set the table.

CAROL

Hello? Oh, yes, I did make up the cast list. I was going to post it at church tomorrow. Well, I suppose I could let you know...

Carol finds her binder.

CAROL (CONT'D)

Congratulations, you're in. We'll be scheduling rehearsals soon. You'll get a schedule. Okay. Bye.

Hangs up. A moment later the phone rings again.

DISSOLVE:

INT. KITCHEN -- EVENING

Dave, Eve and Louise are seated around the table, eating while Carol still works the phone.

CAROL

Oh, Hello, Mrs. MacDonald. Mary? Well, I was going to post...let me check.

(she flips the paper back and forth)

Why, yes she did make the cut. I'll be sending out the rehearsal schedule shortly. Good night.

Joonie comes in from soccer practice. Carol hangs up.

JOONIE

Was someone supposed to pick me up?

CAROL

Oops.

The phone rings.

DAVE

Let the machine pick it up. Eat.
You can call them back later to tell
them they're in the show.

JOONIE

The audition results? All right.
Did the band make it? How about me?
I'm willing to work solo. What part
do I play?

CAROL

Well, honey, it's just that; I, you,
I mean---

JOONIE

What? I'm not a shepherd, am I?

CAROL

I love you, David.

JOONIE

Not the innkeeper. He's like the
bad guy!

CAROL

No, no, in fact---you didn't make
it.

JOONIE

What do you mean I didn't make it?

CAROL

We really don't have a place for a
rock fusion band. They weren't---

EVE

Good?

CAROL

Appropriate.

JOONIE

But I'm your son!

CAROL

I'm sorry, but you can still be
involved.

(MORE)

CAROL (CONT'D)

We still need stage hands, prop people, lighting people and all that. Not all the work is done on stage.

JOONIE

No, just the good stuff.

CAROL

I'm sorry, honey.

JOONIE

Did Eve get in?

CAROL

(checking clipboard)

Well, yes.

EVE

Mom, can I say something?

CAROL

What?

EVE

Nee-ner, nee-ner, nee-ner.

Joonie chases her out of the living room.

LOUISE

Nee-ner, nee-ner, nee-ner.

DAVE

You have the remote?

INT. DEN -- EVENING

Carol writing away. She stops. She leafs through the manuscript. She's done.

INT. SHELLY'S KITCHEN -- DAY

Shelly and Carol drinking coffee at the kitchen table. Shelly's reviewing the script.

SHELLY

Carol, this is wonderful.

CAROL

Really? You think? I mean, I think so, but I'm bias.

SHELLY

No, really, you put your heart and soul into this.

(MORE)

SHELLY (CONT'D)

All those things you've been bugging me about Christmas for years is here. I'd forgotten how well you write.

CAROL

Thanks.

SHELLY

You should do it more often.

CAROL

Who's got the time?

SHELLY

You did this.

CAROL

Well, I had to.

SHELLY

All writing is "had to." I can't believe you haven't written in years.

CAROL

That's not quite true either.

SHELLY

What?

CAROL

I've been working on a play.

SHELLY

A play?

CAROL

Just a few pages and scenes now and again. If I couldn't sleep or the baby took an extra long nap, I'd do some pages. I think it's a musical.

SHELLY

By all means, let's see it.

CAROL

It's like college all over again.

SHELLY

Oh, yes, the variety shows.

CAROL

All singing, all dancing---

SHELLY

All nighters. And we got college credits for that.

CAROL
Ah, higher education.

SHELLY
None higher.

CAROL
Good times.

SHELLY
They're still good times.

CAROL
Oh, of course. Of course they are.
Just, you know, different.

SHELLY
Granted, the focus isn't as sharp.
And that whole "self-centered" thing
takes a real hit once you pick up a
husband and kids.

CAROL
I mean, it's not like I was Ms.
Narcissism...but I do miss the "me
time," the self-indulgences.

SHELLY
Oh, man, yes, the "I-wannas."

CAROL
Well, it was fun while it lasted.

SHELLY
After we finish this, let's take a
look at that play. I know a theater
group that's always looking for
material.

CAROL
Yes. Wonderful. Thank you. Just
what I needed to hear.

INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA -- DAY

Joonie and the band are seated, eating.

JOONIE
I can't believe we're not in that
stupid pageant.

JOE
Don't worry, Davey, they'll be other
pageants.

LARS
Sure. Next year, for instance.

JOONIE
We're not a pageant band.

HARRY
We're such failures.

JOONIE
No, we're not. You're not a failure
if you keep trying. You can only be
a failure if you give up.

LARS
Or die. Then you'll die a failure.

JOE
Shut up, Lars.

JOONIE
Guys, let's try to focus on why we
formed the band.

GUYS
Right!

LARS
Why?

JOE & HARRY
Yeah, why?

JOONIE
To express ourselves.

GUYS
Right.

HARRY
And meet babes.

JOE
That, too. Well, it's not like we
won't be busy.

HARRY
Man, yeah. I've got a book report.

JOE
Right. And our science projects.

JOONIE
And we need band practice.

LARS
But being in the pageant would have
been fun.

GUYS

Yeah.

JOONIE

Oh, please. Yeah, it would have been.

INT. AUDITORIUM -- DAY

The cast is on stage as Carol addresses them.

CAROL

Welcome, everybody. I'm Carol Minelli. I'm running this year's pageant along with Shelly Bernstein, the music director. For the next few weeks we'll be eating, drinking and sleeping Christmas. The pageant's been a tradition at St. Michael's for many years. We're trying something new, so we'll all be part of a new tradition. Thank you for wanting to be part of it. Ms. Bernstein will now hand out the scripts and we'll read through.

Shelly begins handing out scripts.

INT. AUDITORIUM -- LATER

The group is rehearsing a dance. Carol makes notes in her binder.

Later:

The choir sings while Shelly plays her heart out. Carol is in the audience with some others, watching, enjoying.

INT. AUDITORIUM -- EVENING

Carol oversees the construction of sets. Joonie walks in, along with Joe, Harry and Lars, dressed to work. Carol, touched, runs over and hugs him. He is so embarrassed.

JOONIE

Mom, not in front of the band.

Carol backs off. Carol shakes his hand, enthusiastically.

INT. KITCHEN -- EVENING

Carol comes in, carrying Louise. Looking harried. Dave enters, still in his office suit. The kids enter and they look hungry. Carol goes to the freezer. It's barren. She goes to the fridge.

EVE
What's for supper?

Carol whips out skittle.

CAROL
How about my famous French fry and
cheese omelet?

The mob is appeased.

INT. AUDITORIUM -- EVENING

Shelly is at the piano, with Carol in the audience. Eve
steps out on stage.

EVE
Mom, Joonie and the guys have been
working on that big holiday production
number for you, and they'd like to
present it now.

SHELLY
This is the new arrangement of the
classic 12 days of...

Joonie, Joe, Harry and Lars step on stage.

JOONIE
We're not ready.

EVE
Excuse me?

JOONIE
We're not ready. We've been having
a problem getting the, er, props
together.

EVE
No props?

HARRY
We've got props. We just had to
make some substitutions.

EVE
Substitutions? What kind of
substitutions?

JOONIE
Well, like this first thing on the
list here---

EVE
The partridge in a pear tree?

JOE
Very hard to come by.

LARS
And technically, it's two props.
You have your partridge and you have
your pear tree.

EVE
So you do have them?

HARRY
Yes.

LARS
Yes.

JOONIE
No.

GUYS
No, we don't.

EVE
You said it wouldn't be a problem.

HARRY
That was before we knew what we were
talking about.

JOONIE
But it's covered.

EVE
Covered? It's covered.

JOONIE
Covered. We've got a substitution.

EVE
What did you get?

LARS
(pulling out CD)
A Partridge family album on CD.

EVE
The Partridge family?

JOE
Yeah, that TV singing group.

HARRY
Like O-town or the Monkees.

EVE

There are no monkeys in the 12 days
of Christmas.

JOONIE

No, no. The Monkees, they sing,
like the Cowsills.

EVE

We won't need the cows until we get
to the eight maids a-milking.

JOONIE

About them---

EVE

Them? The eight maids? What about
them?

JOE

We've got eight maids.

EVE

Good.

HARRY

But they don't do milking.

EVE

They don't do milking.

LARS

Or windows.

EVE

What do they do?

JOONIE

They'll dust.

EVE

So we have eight Maids a-dusting.

JOONIE

You bet.

EVE

Anything else we should be aware of?

LARS

Plenty.

JOE

Like this item #12.

EVE

Twelve drummers drumming?

Joe and Harry push Lars, who runs offstage.

JOONIE

We couldn't get 12 drummers drumming,
but we do have Lars who is willing
to do a 12 minute drum solo. Hit
it!

Curtain up on Lars at a drum set. Drum solo ensues.

EVE

Hold it! Hold it!

JOONIE

But we figure it might pull in the
head bangers.

EVE

How about pipers? Did we get pipers?

JOONIE

We got pipes.

HARRY

And we got plumbers.

EVE

Plumbers?

JOONIE

Union rules.

JOE

They're strict about that.

HARRY

Very strict.

LARS

It was a little scary, in fact.

EVE

Why don't we just start and see how
it turns out?

JOONIE

That might be best. Otherwise you
might not begin.

HARRY

Hit it!

Shelly begins playing the song, Harry and Joe pull out their
guitars and play.

JOONIE

(singing)

On the twelfth day of Christmas, my
true love gave to me, a twelve minute
drum solo...

New drum solo goes.

JOONIE (CONT'D)

11 Plumbers piping...

Kids in plumber suits carrying pipes and wrenches begin
clanking the pipes and wrenches.

HARRY

10 Lord and Taylors...

Ten KIDS walk out with Lord & Taylor shopping bags.

JOONIE

9 Lady fingers...

Sally enters with a tray of food and serves some to Joonie,
Joe and Eve.

JOONIE (CONT'D)

(Ritzy)

Why, thank you.

JOE

Eight maids a-dusting...

Girls in Maid outfits come out with feather dusters, dusting
everyone and everything. Sneezing ensues.

JOONIE

7 Swanson dinners...

Ding sound. Janet and Donna enter with TV dinners.

HARRY

6 Gooses.

Girl walks behind Joonie and pinches him.

JOONIE

Hey!

GIRL

Oh you kid!

ALL

5 Onion Rings!

Five fast food WORKERS arrive with onion rings and fries.
They hold up the onion rings.

EVE

They actually smell pretty good.

JOONIE

Four calling plans.

Four kids walk out carrying phones and papers.

EVE

Three French fries.

Three of the fast food WORKERS hold up fries.

JOONIE

Two Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.

Two kids come out in too-small Halloween costumes.

ALL

And a Partridge Family album on CD.

John (the roadie) comes out holding the CD.

SHELLY

We saved the receipts for all this stuff, right?

Carol is writing in the binder.

JOONIE

So, what do you think?

CAROL

Don't change a thing. I think I've just found the perfect end to act one.

INT. DAVE'S OFFICE -- DAY

Dave is going back and forth between keyboards. He goes to his briefcase and opens it. A audio cassette tape is there, marked "Xmas Demo." He pulls out a tape player from the depths of his desk and pops it in. Carol's voice comes on.

CAROL (O.S.)

Okay, here it is; the demo reel for your song. I hope you like it, honey.

The pageant version of Dave's song comes on. It sounds good.

Just then, Dave's boss, MR. RANDELL, Harvey and client, SAL BENZINNI, walk by the door. They stop and listen to the song.

SAL

Now, why can't you write me a ditty like that?

RANDELL
We just did.

DAVE
Excuse me?

HARVEY
Beg pardon?

RANDELL
Dave, this is Sal Benzinni of
Benzinni's Frozen Pizza.

DAVE
Oh, yes. I heard we were working
for you now.

SAL
So far your cohorts have come up
with squat.

DAVE
Okay. And---?

SAL
I like that song.

DAVE
That song is taken.

RANDELL
Do you have another employer?

DAVE
Well, no, Mr. Randell but I wrote it
for my wife.

RANDELL
Then she should be honored that it'll
be a cornerstone for the Benzinni
frozen pizza campaign.

DAVE
I'm not sure how well that will go
over.

RANDELL
Does she like having you bring home
a regular paycheck?

DAVE
Yes.

RANDELL
Would she like that to continue?

DAVE

Yes.

RANDELL

She'll be fine with it.

SAL

All right! C'mon, Randy, let's get down to cases. And a case of frozen pizzas to you, bucko.

Randell holds out his hand. Dave takes out the cassette and hands it over.

INT. AUDITORIUM -- NIGHT

In the catwalks, WORKERS are installing a snow making machine above the stage. Carol is watching from the stage. Shelly walks up.

CAROL

Want to start it up?

Suddenly a load of snow gets dropped on them.

SHELLY

'Taint a fit night out for man nor beast.

CAROL

Shut up.

INT. CLASSROOM -- DAY

The class is obviously in session. Suddenly Joonie and Eve hustle in.

EVE

Sorry we're late.

JOONIE

Overslept.

EVE

My mom gave us this note.

She hands a folded sheet of paper to the teacher.

TEACHER

This is blank.

JOONIE

Oh, man, she forgot to write it out. Sorry, she's kinda swamped these days.

TEACHER

Take your seats.

INT. RECTORY OFFICE -- DAY

Fr. Ron is at his desk with the bills. Carol enters.

CAROL

Hi, Father, what's up?

FATHER RON

Ah, Carol. I've been going over the budget and it seems we're almost tapped out.

CAROL

What?

FATHER RON

There's not much money left. The budget was approved long before we thought to change the show. We won't break even.

CAROL

Well, sure, if we only do it one night.

FATHER RON

Excuse me?

CAROL

We have the talent, the stage hands, the production up and on its feet. It's a lot of energy for a one night stand--excuse me--I was going to suggest, well, I'm suggesting we extend the run.

FATHER RON

I don't know.

CAROL

Look, the basic nut is there. Ticket sales for two additional nights will more than pay for it.

FATHER RON

We've never tried to do it on that scale.

CAROL

We do it say, Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Triple our take. That's what the Protestants are doing.

FATHER RON

(considering)

Let's do it then. Let's do it up
right.

Carol puts up her hand to high five. Fr. Ron mimics her but just stands there. Carol pushes their hands together.

CAROL

All right.

Insert: Carol's binder turning to the page reading "Sketch. The Bedtime Before Christmas"

INT. STAGE SET -- DAY

The skit in rehearsal. The curtains open on a kitchen set. Mom (played by Fran from the Ladies Committee) pacing, rocking baby, trying to give baby bottle.

FRAN

Come on, baby, it's late. Drink your ba-ba. Mommy's got a lot to do yet. I still have to put together the bike and something called "Capt. Danger's Laser Palace and Turbo Home." Be a good baby.

KIDS (O.S.)

Mom!

The kids, played by Eve's friends Sally and Janet (in pigtails) and John, Joonie's roadie, dressed in pajamas, enter.

FRAN

What is it?

JOHN

Is it Christmas yet?

FRAN

No, it's still a couple of hours away.

SALLY

Did Santa come early, maybe?

FRAN

No, Santa doesn't come early. He comes exactly on time every year.

JANET

What time does he come?

FRAN

Bedtime. Now go to sleep...

Kids exit.

FRAN (CONT'D)

Come on, babe. Daddy's not going to be home from the store 'til late. Lord knows why he waits 'til the last minute to try and find "Dolly Crawlabout." Don't you want your Mr. WillyBilly's Foam Action Figures? You won't get it until you go to sleep.

Kids enter.

KIDS

Mom!!!

FRAN

What is it?

JOHN

We can't sleep.

FRAN

Count sheep.

JANET

But it's Christmas!

FRAN

Then count reindeer. Upstairs, now!...

Kids exit. Fran shifts baby to burping position.

FRAN (CONT'D)

All right, little one, let's get a nice burp, then we go to sleep. Come on, little burp...

Huge burp is heard. Fran looks surprised.

FRAN (CONT'D)

Whoa! I wanted a burp, not an eruption!

Kids enter.

KIDS

Mom!

FRAN

What?

SALLY

We're too excited to sleep.

JOHN

Yeah, we're thinking about all the great presents we're going to find under the tree.

FRAN

Well, then think about all the coal you're going to find in your stocking if you don't go to bed now!

JANET

But mom, it's Christmas Eve. Santa's already made his list.

JOHN

And checked it twice!

SALLY

Now doesn't count.

FRAN

He can be beeped. Bed. Now....

Kids exit.

FRAN (CONT'D)

There we go, darlin'. Nice and easy. Night-night.

(singing)

Silent night. Holy night. All is calm---

Kids enter.

KIDS

Mom!

FRAN

What!

JOHN

We took a vote.

SALLY

We want to watch the rest of the Yule log on Channel 11.

FRAN

You watched enough.

JANET

But we want to see how it ends.

FRAN

I'll tape it for you.

JOHN
Mom, did you leave cookies out for
Santa?

FRAN
Yes.

SALLY
What kind?

FRAN
Chocolate chip.

SALLY
Jimmy left Oreos last year and he
got a Mr. Savage Action Man and his
Killer Dino-Droids.

FRAN
So?

JANET
Maybe you should put out some Oreo
cookies so we can get good stuff.

JOHN
Yeah. And real Oreos. Not that
bogus Hydrox stuff.

FRAN
Get to bed before I put out saltine
crackers and you can kiss your chance
for a polyurethane skateboard and
helmet good-by.

KIDS
But we're not sleepy!

SALLY
Yeah, we want to do something
Christmas-y.

JANET
Like sing carols.

JOHN
Or decorate something.

Fran picks up a sprig of green stuff.

FRAN
Fine. We'll play with the mistletoe.
You know how this works?

KIDS
No.

FRAN

(holds over John)

I put it over your head and you have to kiss your sisters. And they have to kiss you!

Kids exit screaming.

FRAN (CONT'D)

I suppose I could tell them it's only parsley. Nah.

(sings)

Sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.

INT. AUDITORIUM -- DAY

Shelly and Carol at piano, watching the sketch end. Others are standing, watching, enjoying.

SHELLY

Funny.

CAROL

You know what they say, write what you know.

SHELLY

It plays good.

CAROL

Very good, very good. Kids, great. Okay, let's set up the next card. So, what do you think?

SHELLY

I think everyone's working hard and I think it shows. They're doing great. Now, about Dave's song. When are you going to assign the solo?

CAROL

I can't make up my mind.

SHELLY

Eve's very good.

CAROL

She is, isn't she? I'm talking as a director, not her mother.

SHELLY

Of course.

CAROL
 Eve singing Dave's song in my show.
 Is that inviting wrath?

SHELLY
 If she's good, she's good.

CAROL
 Damn straight, whoops, darn straight.

She crosses herself.

INT. AUDITORIUM -- EVENING

Fr. Ron enters. Carol is straightening up.

FATHER RON
 Carol, there's a problem.

CAROL
 What?

FATHER RON
 The building inspector was here today.
 The school's oil burner is shot.
 Carbon monoxide is showing up. We
 have to get it replaced. Before the
 holidays.

CAROL
 And?

FATHER RON
 We have to use the show budget to
 pay for it.

CAROL
 But Father, I've spent, I mean, things
 have been rented; deposits paid.
 The show's dependent on that.

FATHER RON
 I'm sorry. You'll have to scale
 back.

CAROL
 There is no scaling back. We're
 committed. I budgeted to the penny.

FATHER RON
 Then perhaps we just need to cancel;
 cut our losses and try again next
 year.

CAROL

Well, wait, if we do the show a couple of more nights, we could make up the difference, I just know it.

FATHER RON

Do you think?

CAROL

I'm certain. More shows, more money, it's basic economics.

FATHER RON

But we need the money now.

CAROL

Okay, okay, how about this---

(wheels spinning)

What if I get a loan, you fix the furnace, we do the show, and pay back the loan and we're better than even.

FATHER RON

If you could do that, there just might be a sainthood in it for you.

CAROL

No prob.

FATHER RON

Great. But I need to know by tomorrow.

He leaves.

CAROL

I'm pretty certain all this lying is going to count against me with the sainthood board.

FADE OUT

FADE IN:

EXT. STREET -- DAY

The town is decorated for Thanksgiving. Carol walks out of the town bank and into the bank down the block.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. STREET -- LATER

Carol walks out of the that bank and into a loan company.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. STREET -- LATER

Carol walks out of the loan company and passed a pawn shop. She pauses a moment, then shakes it off and heads off.

INT. KITCHEN -- DAY

Joonie and Eve look in the bare cupboards.

JOONIE

Nothing here.

EVE

I'm starving.

JOONIE

Come on, I still have some Halloween candy stashed away.

INT. MACDONALD'S LIBRARY -- DAY

Musty, grand, showy library with portraits of the late Mr. MacDonald and grand dame MacDonald looming over Carol. She's seated at a small table and chair with some tea.

Carol looks up at the imposing Mrs. MacDonald then to the equally imposing Mr. MacDonald. When she looks back to Mrs. MacDonald's portrait, Mrs. MacDonald herself is now standing there, startling Carol.

CAROL

Oh, Mrs. MacDonald, there you are.

MRS. MACDONALD

Yes, here I am. Now, Mrs. Minelli, why have you come here?

CAROL

Well, ma'am, it's like this, we have a pageant, we need a furnace and, well, we can't afford both.

MRS. MACDONALD

Yes?

CAROL

I was hoping, really hoping, that, in the spirit of the season, that you might be persuaded to donate some, well, you know, money, for the furnace. And that would let the pageant go on, and, of course, it's a loan, so after the show, you'd be paid back.

MRS. MACDONALD

Why does the pageant's existence concern me?

CAROL

It's a tradition. A sacred tradition for us. We've been doing the pageant for years, Mrs. MacDonald.

MRS. MACDONALD

Not this pageant.

CAROL

That's not fair. You can't hold it against me for trying to update the pageant.

MRS. MACDONALD

So there's tradition and then there's tradition.

CAROL

It was time for a change.

MRS. MACDONALD

I found the pageant satisfactory.

CAROL

Satisfactory doesn't cut it, ma'am.

MRS. MACDONALD

In your opinion.

CAROL

My pageant, my opinion. It's the one time everyone starts thinking about others a little more. I was hoping the pageant would reflect that.

MRS. MACDONALD

Funny you should mention "thinking about others."

CAROL

How funny?

MRS. MACDONALD

I was hoping you would think of my Mary when it came time to assign the solo.

CAROL

I'll admit she's very good. And she is in the running.

MRS. MACDONALD

Because I could certainly see my way to supporting the arts if I had a rooting interest.

CAROL

Rooting interest?

MRS. MACDONALD

Yes.

CAROL

Are you saying what I think you're saying?

MRS. MACDONALD

I think you know what you think I'm saying.

CAROL

But are you thinking what I'm thinking is thinking of what I'm thinking you're thinking...I'm sorry, I lost that thread completely.

MRS. MACDONALD

If Mary gets the part, you get the money.

CAROL

(slowly dawning)

Oh! Oh. Ooooh. But, Mrs. MacDonald!

MRS. MACDONALD

You said it yourself, she's in the running.

CAROL

Sure, I said that, but I was trying to butter you up. You're not going to hold me to a little brown nosing, are you?

Mrs. Macdonald glares.

CAROL (CONT'D)

I suppose you would. Okay, but if she gets picked, you'll foot the bill.

MRS. MACDONALD

Indeed.

CAROL

I'll see what I can do.

MRS. MACDONALD

And no one else is to know about this. It could ruin Mary's self esteem.

CAROL

Of course.

MRS. MACDONALD

Good day, Mrs. Minelli. A pleasure.

MacDonald exits.

CAROL

Indeed.

Big sigh as Carol's self esteem deflates.

INT. AUDITORIUM -- NIGHT

As Shelly plays Dave's song, the chorus sings, including Mary and Eve. They are in the middle. Carol is wandering up and down the choir, listening to each as they sing. Whatever she's deciding, it's gonna be a tough choice.

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

Carol's minivan drives home.

INT. MINIVAN -- NIGHT

Carol is driving. Eve is very tight-lipped and holding in a major disappointment. They pull into the driveway.

CAROL

Look, Eve, You have to understand---

Eve gets out of the car, slams the door, and hurries into the house. She slams the door shut.

INT. FOYER -- NIGHT

Carol enters the house. We hear a door slam upstairs.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Dave is on the couch eating some frozen pizza. Joonie is on the phone while eating pizza. Carol enters. Joonie points upstairs. A door slams.

DAVE

What happened?

CAROL

Nothing happened.

DAVE
 (displaying pizza
 slice)
 I solved the dinner dilemma.

JOONIE
 Hey, mom, is it true?

CAROL
 What?

JOONIE
 You picked Mary MacDonald to sing
 the solo over your own daughter?

CAROL
 I chose Mary, yes.

DAVE
 Oh, boy.

JOONIE
 (to phone)
 Harry! It's true! Ha!

CAROL
 I had to!

DAVE
 You had to?

CAROL
 Well, not *had* to, but they were both
 equally good, but how would it look
 if I picked my own daughter?
 Especially over the MacDonald's kid.

DAVE
 It would look like you made the right
 choice.

CAROL
 No, it wouldn't.

DAVE
 No, it wouldn't? You explained this
 to Eve?

CAROL
 I tried!

DAVE
 And?

Carol, at a lost for words, slams the door and motions to it
 as an answer.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Funny we should be talking about the
song---

CAROL

How funny?

DAVE

You can't use it.

CAROL

What?

DAVE

My boss heard it and, well, a client
heard it and they want it.

CAROL

Want it for what?

DAVE

A frozen pizza ad.

CAROL

No. No.

DAVE

It's not like there's a choice here.

CAROL

Of course there is. Just say no.

DAVE

This isn't a drug deal. I can't
tell him that.

CAROL

Why not?

DAVE

He's the boss.

CAROL

What am I supposed to do?

DAVE

Well, gee, there's only like a million
Christmas carols out there. Choose
one.

CAROL

I go through all this grief over Eve
singing your song and now you take
away the song? How could you?

DAVE

How could I what? Decide between my paying job and a church play? Is that the question? Was I supposed to quit over this?

CAROL

You could have done something.

DAVE

I did. I'm sorry.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY -- DAY

Eve, Sally, Donna and Janet are exchanging homework.

EVE

Thanks, guys. The rehearsal ran so late last night.

SALLY

Okay, so that's your math homework, English, Spanish---

EVE

I'm missing Spanish.

JANET

Don't look at me, I take Italian.

INT. AUDITORIUM -- EVENING

Carol, looking frazzled, is organizing the choir. Shelly is ready at the piano. Carol comes over and hands her sheet music.

CAROL

There's a change. Dave's song is out.

SHELLY

Out?

CAROL

Out. We're changing to "What Child is This."

SHELLY

Okay, boss. You okay?

CAROL

Why?

SHELLY

You look a little beat.

CAROL

Beat?

SHELLY

No sleep.

CAROL

Do I have circles under my eyes?

SHELLY

Looks like a second set of eyebrows.

CAROL

Thanks.

(calling out)

Okay, people, let's get started.

We've got a new song to learn.

Where's Mary? Mary MacDonald? Her solo's changed.

GIRL

She's not here.

CAROL

Again?

GIRL 2

She said there was this big one day sale at the mall she couldn't miss.

CAROL

One day sale? One day sale? What is wrong with her? Didn't anyone remind her it's rehearsal? Doesn't she care about the show?

Mrs. MacDonald walks in with Mary. Carol snaps around all pleasant.

MARY

You see, Grandma? There's this big choir and they simply drown me out!

MRS. MACDONALD

Is that true?

CAROL

Up until she sings the solo, then the choir doesn't sing. Hence the term "solo."

SHELLY

She might know that if she showed up to rehearsal.

Carol shoots Shelly a look.

MRS. MACDONALD
I beg your pardon?

CAROL
We must rehearse the show.

MRS. MACDONALD
Mary tells me there aren't any
Christmas trees in the show.

CAROL
Well, that's not true. We have a
tree for one number.

MRS. MACDONALD
What number?

CAROL
"O Christmas Tree."

MRS. MACDONALD
We really think there should be a
tree onstage for the whole show.
Nothing says Christmas like a
Christmas tree.

SHELLY
(aside)
Hence the term "Christmas tree."

Carol shushes her. Shelly is taken aback.

CAROL
Well, I suppose it's possible.

MRS. MACDONALD
A big glorious tree lit up with
hundreds of lights.

MARY
The twinkle-ly kind.

MRS. MACDONALD
Yes, the twinkle-ly kind.

CAROL
Oh yes.

SHELLY
Indeed. It just reeks Christmas.

That earns her another look from Carol.

MRS. MACDONALD
I'll send the car for you at nine,
Mary.

MARY

Thank you, grandma.

Carol waves Mary to her place. MacDonald gives a satisfied nod to Carol and leaves.

SHELLY

Could it get any chillier?

CAROL

(to herself)

Yes. Yes, it could.

INT. BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Carol's been through the closet and there's a box of labeled "ornaments" opened. Dave walks in from the bathroom, ready for bed.

DAVE

What's up?

CAROL

I wanted to see something.

DAVE

What?

CAROL

This

She holds up a pretty little Christmas ball with a fireside Christmas scene painted on it.

CAROL (CONT'D)

My ornament. I love this one. I always made sure that I was the one to put it up. It's a family Christmas morning. I looked at that family and thought it was my family, preserved at Christmas forever.

DAVE

I remember it.

CAROL

One year, I wouldn't even let my mom put it away. I hung it in my room all year.

DAVE

It's too early to get the tree, honey.

CAROL

It's for the show.

DAVE

The show?

CAROL

And for me. I was thinking of hanging it on the tree we have onstage. The new twinkley one. As a reminder. To keep me focused. It wasn't the Christmas season until I hung this up. I hope it still works.

They prepare for bed.

DAVE

That's cute, "I hope it still works."

CAROL

Sorry I snapped at you.

DAVE

Me, too. Things getting tense?

CAROL

I'll say. This pageant is taking on a life of its own.

DAVE

You're the boss. Take charge.

CAROL

I just want it to be worth it.

DAVE

I'm sure it will be.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- EVENING

Carol and Dave, watching TV. Carol is working on her binder.

TV ANNOUNCER

And now we return to Johnny Chen's "Crouching Dragon, Christmas Carol."

TV PROGRAM

INT. SCROOGE'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

An ASIA SCROOGE in a night shirt sits on his four post bed eating a bowl of gruel. A bell rings. Scrooge looks up to see the door bell ringing. Then other bells chime in.

The bedroom doors fly open and ASIAN MARLEY'S GHOST comes cartwheeling in, chains and all.

The characters are dubbed in bad English.

ASIAN SCROOGE

Who are you I am seeing?

ASIAN MARLEY

I was your partner, Marley. Now I am dead. I come to teach you the true meaning of Christmas.

ASIAN SCROOGE

Bah! Humbug! I do not need lessons from you!

Scrooge leaps out of the bed at Marley. They engage in a moment of hand-to-hand combat. Scrooge is winning.

ASIAN SCROOGE (CONT'D)

You think you are strong, but I am stronger!

ASIAN MARLEY

You fight well, Scrooge. I must summon help.

A gong sounds. The window opens. Christmases PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE come flying in the window. They all surround Scrooge and strike poses.

ASIAN MARLEY (CONT'D)

Welcome the Spirits of Christmas Past, Present and Future.

ASIAN SCROOGE

Long future?

ASIAN MARLEY

Your future!

ASIAN SCROOGE

Bah! Humbug!

They attack. Scrooge holds them off for a while, leaping across the room. But the spirits soon overpower him. Marley takes a length of his chain and wraps it around Scrooge's neck.

ASIAN MARLEY

Say it, say it!

ASIAN SCROOGE

Very well! I will keep the spirit of Christmas in my heart always!

The Spirits release him and they all bow, nice and proper.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Carol and Dave are dumbfounded. Joonie's in the room now, eating some pizza.

JOONIE

Cool! Can we do something like that?

Carol and Dave can only stare at him.

JOONIE (CONT'D)

Good frozen pizza.

INT. AUDITORIUM -- NIGHT

Carol's alone. The room empty. She goes onstage. She goes to the Christmas tree. She hangs her ornament and sighs.

INT. AUDITORIUM -- LATER

The room is lite and busy now, with Carol working with dancers on one number.

DISSOLVE:

INT. AUDITORIUM -- LATER

Clock on the wall shows after eleven. Carol is rehearsing Eve and the chorus still.

INT. CLASSROOM -- DAY

The TEACHER is at the chalkboard, droning on and on.

Eve and Joonie are part of the class. Eve is seated beside Joonie. She's fighting to stay awake. She nods off and Joonie throws a crumbled up page of looseleaf at her to wake her up.

INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA -- DAY

Joonie and the guys at a table. Joonie is writing. Eve walks over and sits.

EVE

What are you writing?

JOONIE

Dad had to pull his song from the play, so I'm writing a new song.

HARRY

For what?

JOONIE

For us. So we can play the show for real.

JOE

Really? Great. I hated to lose that gig.

LARS

Especially since we just got use to saying words like "gig."

EVE

Good luck.

Eve drops her head on the table to nap. Joonie hands the guys sheets of paper.

JOONIE

What do you think?

Mary walks over to the table.

MARY

Oh, it's the members of the chorus who aren't soloists.

Eve is up.

JOONIE

Well, fortunately, we can actually interact with others.

MARY

But really, can you imagine how talented I must be that I'm a soloist and not the director's own kids.

EVE

Don't discount the pity factor.

MARY

Envy is not a good look for you.

JOONIE

Why don't you go out and mock some sidewalk Santas, get a head start on your coal collection.

MARY

See you onstage. Oh, no, I won't.

Mary moves on to the trendy table.

EVE

It's people like that that give snobbery a bad name.

JOONIE

What happened to her?

(MORE)

JOONIE (CONT'D)

She used to be, no, wait, she was
always like that.

LARS

Boy, the show's never going to vote
her MVP with that 'tude.

JOE

'Tude?

LARS

It's from my hip-word of the day
calendar.

JOE

This rehearsal schedule is starting
to get rough.

JOONIE

The band hasn't practiced at all.

EVE

And we know you can afford to miss
those.

JOONIE

Thank you.

HARRY

I got that book report still and I
haven't even gotten the book yet.

LARS

I haven't seen TV in days.

HARRY

Whoa. You win.

JOONIE

Well, check out this diddy. This'll
have us "jammin'!"

LARS

Hey, that's tomorrow's word!

JOE

Whoa-whoa.

Lars starts tapping out a beat with a pair of sporks. Joe
and Harry start humming. Eve, reading, starts to sing as
the other back her up.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- AFTERNOON

Carol is on the sofa, eyes closed. Joonie and Eve come in carrying fast food bags.

JOONIE

Oh, mom, you had a call. Mrs. MacDonald. She called about some changes in the music.

CAROL

(weary)
Changes.

INT. KITCHEN -- DAY

Thanksgiving Day. The kitchen is in a shambles, with a mess or pile of something everywhere. Louise is in a high chair, covered with strained something or other. Carol is on the phone. Dave walks in with groceries.

DAVE

I don't get it. You're not making the whole dinner. All you're bringing is the yams and string bean casserole. How could you forget to get the yams and the string beans?

Carol shushes him. Annoyed, he plops down the bags and leaves. Carol starts sorting things.

CAROL

Shelly? Hi, it's Carol.

INTERCUT:

INT. SHELLY'S KITCHEN -- DAY

Shelly is in the process of basting a turkey.

SHELLY

Hey. I thought you'd be at your mom's by now.

CAROL

Ingredient snag, so I'm running late.

SHELLY

What's up?

CAROL

I got some notes about the show.

SHELLY

Notes? You got notes?

CAROL

Notes.

SHELLY

Whose notes?

CAROL

Important notes.

(it's killing her to
say this)

It's been suggested that since the
scope of the pageant has grown, the
music's scope should increase.

SHELLY

Meaning?

CAROL

The lone piano isn't up to the task.

SHELLY

And?

CAROL

And the...church...would like to get
some prerecorded music tracks.
Orchestral music to back up the choir.

SHELLY

Are you firing me?

CAROL

No, no. I'm not firing you. It's a
promotion, really. You have to run
the tape player.

SHELLY

You mean I get to turn it both on
and off?

CAROL

Shelly, honey, this is being forced
on me. Be thankful, first they tried
to force the organ on me.

SHELLY

I *can* play the organ.

CAROL

Oh. I forgot. Honestly, I did.

SHELLY

Look, Carol, fine, you're the
director. Direct your brains out.
Happy Thanksgiving.

She hangs up on Carol.

DISSOLVE TO:

BLACK & WHITE MOVIE LEADER, TRAILER

EXT. BEDFORD FALLS -- NIGHT

Snowy night in the cinematic burg.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

And there was the early draft of the script, which had a completely different third act. We filmed it but it didn't test well at all. The footage was recently discovered and makes a great addition to this special addition DVD of "It's a Wonderful Life."

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

A snowy Christmas Eve. A lone figure, frayed and worn and depressed GEORGE BAILEY, stands on the middle of the bridge, contemplating the swirling waters beneath. Suddenly, an angel, CLARENCE, appears. As they talk, we truck in and can now hear them speak:

CLARENCE

What's so hard to believe, George?

GEORGE

Wait a second, Clarence, let me get this straight; My life is a shambles. I'm about to throw myself off the bridge and you show up.

CLARENCE

Right.

GEORGE

Now you're going to show what everything would be like if I had never been born?

CLARENCE

Yup. Pretty amazing, eh?

GEORGE

And then?

CLARENCE

And then you'll see how wonderful everything is.

GEORGE

Sounds pretty screwy to me, but I'll bite.

CLARENCE

Remember this, George?

CUT TO:

EXT. HILL - DAY

CHILDREN, George and friends as boys, slide down a hill onto a pond. George and Clarence observe, unnoticed.

GEORGE

Sure, this is the day my brother almost drown! Oh, I get it, so he drowns, and can't become a war hero.

CLARENCE

Well, no. Harry Bailey went to war.

GEORGE

How? Harry Bailey drown because I wasn't there to save him!

CLARENCE

Gee, George, it's not like you were the only kid in town who knew how to swim, after all. Wonderful boys, each and everyone. So Harry went on to become a decorated war hero. He came home, was famous and ended up as a spokesman for a beer company.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOWN STREET - NIGHT

Present day Bedford Falls, they watch the people traverse the busy streets. It has stopped snowing. MR. GOWER, wealthy business man is closing up his shop.

GEORGE

Okay, here, what about Mr. Gower, the pharmacist? If I wasn't there to stop him, he would've poisoned that kid.

CLARENCE

But you weren't there and he did poison that child.

GEORGE

He did---? But he looks fine!

CLARENCE

He got himself this wonderful lawyer and was acquitted of the involuntary manslaughter charges. It was an accident, for Pete's sake. You didn't know that the boy would grow up to be a 60's radical terrorist bomber wanted by the FBI, did you?

GEORGE

Aah, no. No, I didn't. How about the Building & Loan? It's not here!

CLARENCE

Chase Manhattan bought it up in a hostile takeover bid. They moved the operations to Manhattan.

GEORGE

You're kidding.

CLARENCE

Wonderful stroke of luck, wasn't it? Your mother and uncle Billy did okay thanks to those golden parachutes they had.

GEORGE

Wonderful. But, Mary---

CLARENCE

She married millionaire Sam Wainwright. Had a couple of kids, divorced, and she got a wonderful settlement. Does lots of charity work and dates younger men.

GEORGE

Where's Potter? Does anyone ever try to stop old man Potter from taking over the town?

CLARENCE

Really, George, how long did you think the old coot was going to live? He's been old forever! Never had a family, so when he died, the state got everything. Boy, was he a crotchety old fart.

GEORGE

So, Clarence, remind me again the point of this whole thing? Seeing Martini and Nick franchise their restaurant? Watching Violet become a major porn star?

(MORE)

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Seeing Bert and Ernie get into educational television? This was supposed to make me feel better?

CLARENCE

It seemed like a good idea at the time. I guess you had to be there. But what did you expect? You're only one person, George. How much can you do?

GEORGE

So, if I'm not around, it doesn't matter.

CLARENCE

Of course it does, it's just that nature abhors a vacuum. If you weren't around someone would have stepped in to do those things because it was the right thing to do. And lighten up. It's only money. Oh, by the by, Potter has your money.

GEORGE

What?

CLARENCE

Yeah, your goofy Uncle Billy gave it to him by mistake. I think you can nail Potter for false arrest or harassment or something. Think about it.

GEORGE

Wait a second! I ask for help. I pray for it. You come down here and make me review my whole stupid life when all you had to do was tell me Potter swiped my money all the while? Why is it some people get the Ghost of Christmas Past and I get you? Why, I'll wring your neck!

CLARENCE

Oh, Joseph, beam me up!

General confusion ensues. Fade to black. End credit comes up.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

It didn't test very well. And the movie was way shorter.

INT. ELECTRONICS STORE -- DAY

Joonie and the guys are watching a DVD player with the "Wonderful Life" disc playing.

HARRY

Wow, these DVDs are like a film seminar in a box.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. HOUSE -- DAY

Dave is in the process of decorating the lawn. The centerpiece is a nativity scene of plastic lighted figures; Joseph, Mary, Shepherd, Mickey Mouse in a Santa hat, an angel, 3 kings, toy soldiers, Rudolph the Red-Nose Reindeer. The manger is out but empty. Joonie comes up, eating Ritz crackers out of the box.

JOONIE

What're you doing, Dad?

DAVE

Decorating the house.

JOONIE

I was wondering when you'd get around to it.

DAVE

You didn't have to wonder. You could have done it.

Dave plugs in a wire and the whole thing lights.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Done.

JOONIE

No, you're not. Where's baby Jesus?

DAVE

It's not Christmas yet.

JOONIE

What's that mean?

DAVE

Jesus wasn't born yet. We put out the figure on Christmas.

JOONIE

Oh. If he wasn't born yet, then why are they staring at the manger?

DAVE

Because that's where they decided to put him.

JOONIE

Mary doesn't look pregnant.

DAVE

It's the robes.

JOONIE

Why are the three wise men here?
And I don't remember Rudolph being
at the first Christmas.

DAVE

I didn't have any donkeys.

JOONIE

Wouldn't Frosty melt in the desert?

DAVE

You can accept idea of a dancing,
singing snowman but not the concept
of him hanging in the desert?

JOONIE

And the toy soldiers.

DAVE

To guard the manger.

JOONIE

Mom does it different.

DAVE

Mom's not here. So, we're done.

JOONIE

(reaching the end of
the box)
What's for dinner?

DAVE

You just finished it.

They walk inside. It begins to snow.

INT. AUDITORIUM -- NIGHT

Carol is leading the chorus in song. The music speeds up and the chorus speeds up with it. Faster and faster. Carol looks over.

Shelly is operating a large tape player which is now spitting out the tape.

DISSOLVE:

INT. AUDITORIUM -- LATER

It's after midnight. The cast struggles out of the room.

CAROL
Tomorrow, six thirty. Full dress
rehearsal. It's crunch time.

Eve is standing against the door frame, falling asleep.

INT. CLASSROOM -- DAY

Teacher is droning on again. Eve is dropping off. Joonie tosses paper ball at her. It wakes her up.

EXT. MINELLI HOUSE -- DAY

It has snowed quite a bit and Dave is out, shoveling. He's just finished the driveway, freeing the minivan. Carol comes running out. She kisses him, hands him a list and drives off in the minivan.

Dave pockets the list and begins to dig out his car at the curb.

EXT. MINELLI HOUSE -- LATER

The car is now dug out, with the front cleared away so the car can get out. Dave comes out with Louise. He puts her in the car, gets in and drives off.

A few moments later, the sedan comes up, then backs into the spot.

INT. SUPERMARKET -- DAY

Dave is pushing a cart. Louise is sitting in the cart. It's filled with frozen dinners and jars of peanut butter.

Dave turns a corner and runs into JIM, another dad pushing a cart.

JIM
Oh. Hello, Dave.

DAVE
Hello, Jim. What's new?

JIM
So, how much longer do we have to
deal with this?

DAVE

The show's in two weeks, so 'til then.

Another dad, STEVE, comes over, pushing a cart.

STEVE

Hey, Dave, what's wrong with your wife?

DAVE

What's that mean?

STEVE

What does she think, she's Steven Spielberg? It's a stupid Christmas play. I haven't had a decent meal in a month.

JIM

I hope she's getting a TONY for this thing.

DAVE

I doubt that.

STEVE

Can't you get her to ease up a bit?

DAVE

I would if I ever saw her.

Another dad, TOM, comes up.

TOM

Well, well, well, look who's here.

DAVE

Hi, Tom.

TOM

I was all set to put my family's picture on a milk carton. Then I remembered, no, they're not missing, they're just involved in the pageant from hell!

INT. KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Dave is home eating a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Louise is in her high chair opposite him. While Dave is quietly eating his sandwich, looking grumpy, while Louise sees to be having a good time rubbing peanut butter and jelly in her hair.

EXT. AUDITORIUM -- NIGHT

Carol is locking up. A large towncar pulls up. The back window rolls down. It's MacDonald.

MRS. MACDONALD
Good evening, Mrs. Minelli.

CAROL
Good night, Mrs. MacDonald.
(checking watch)
Actually, good morning.

MRS. MACDONALD
We were just coming back from a charity function and it gave me a few ideas about the pageant I wanted to share.

CAROL
Of course it did.

INT. BEDROOM -- NIGHT

After midnight. Homey little room with a TV on a dresser. Dave is asleep. Carol comes in, exhausted. She disappears into the bathroom, comes out in her night shirt. She gets into bed, takes out her binder and turns on the light. This wakes Dave.

DAVE
Hello. What time is it?

CAROL
Almost one. Go back to sleep.

DAVE
The light's keeping me up.

CAROL
I have to make some notes while they're still fresh in my mind.

DAVE
I need to get up in the morning, to work.

CAROL
I have to get up, too.

DAVE
Yes, but it matters if I get up or not.

CAROL
Hey, I have a lot of responsibility and pressure here, too.

DAVE

Oh, yes, "where should I put the sugar plum fairies," "Is this white snow white enough for a white Christmas?" Please.

CAROL

What's that supposed to mean?

DAVE

It means I'm tired and I want to go to sleep.

CAROL

So, who's stopping you?

DAVE

You!

CAROL

Excuse me for working hard all night and getting home late.

DAVE

Don't snap at me. It's not my fault.

CAROL

It's not mine!

DAVE

Well, if it's not mine, then it has to be yours.

CAROL

I have a lot of responsibility and I take it seriously.

DAVE

It's a Christmas play. You're not discovering cold fusion.

CAROL

So? You knew it would take up time.

DAVE

All of it? I'm now cutting out of work early. It's the end of the year. I have a chance to make some OT. I have the boss wondering why I'm not around. Bonuses are being decided. It's be nice to have the money when those Christmas bills come in. Instead, I'm here covering you! This thing is now taking money out of our pockets.

CAROL
It's only money.

DAVE
Yeah, well, Mr. Visa and Mr. Mastercard disagree.

CAROL
It's only for a few weeks more.

DAVE
Right, then I get to return to my job for the rest of my life.

CAROL
You're not very supportive.

DAVE
How would you know if I'm supportive? You're never home! I'm a pageant widow. This show has turned into a monster and needs to be slayed.

CAROL
Oh, please. I thought you were a sucker for Christmas.

DAVE
Yeah, well, this just sucks.

Dave turns over and goes under the covers.

CAROL
(softly)
Oh, David.

She reaches to touch him, but he shrugs her off.

INT. CLASSROOM -- DAY

Teacher is still at it. Joonie tosses a paper ball. It hits Eve in the head, but this time she doesn't move. Apparently it has had no better luck than the previous dozen or so paper balls on Eve's desk.

INT. DAVE'S OFFICE -- DAY

Dave is rushing through some paperwork. His computer kicks on and begins playing a video file.

It's a shot of some record covers on a red and green background.

DJ (V.O.)
Now, from Soprano Productions, it's a great new CD, "A Social Club Christmas"

Graphics of the song titles scroll by.

DJ (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Here you get the stiring sounds of
The Brooklyn Boys' Choir singing
such classic holiday tunes as "What
Child Is This?"

BROOKLYN CHOIR (V.O.)

Whose kid is this?
Who lays to rest
On Mary's stoop is sleeping...

DJ (V.O.)

You'll get such mob favorites as
"God Rest Ye Merry Goodfellas," "The
Little Gunner Boy," "We Three Dons,"
"Code of Silent Night," and "Frosty
the Hitman":

BROOKLYN CHOIR (V.O.)

Frosty "The Hitman" was a happy,
jolly soul.
With a corn-cob pipe and a button
man,
And an ice-pick, his M.O...

DJ (V.O.)

Every one a classic, every one a
hit. Who can forget "I Saw Daddy
Give the Kiss of Death to Santa
Claus," or "Joy to the Woild."
Remember "Let it Freakin' Snow," and
"Rudy 'the Snotnose' Reindeer," "All
I Want for Christmas is Your Two
Front Teeth," "Yo, Christmas Tree,"
and "Asleep With the Fishes":

BROOKLYN CHOIR (V.O.)

Asleep with the fishes, no room in
your bed.
Except for a mackerel and not a horse
head...

DJ (V.O.)

They're all here, including "Grandma
Got Run Over By a Reindeer (but they
made it look like an accident),"
"The First Parole," "(We're Taking
You For a) Sleigh Ride," "Have
Yourself a Merry Little Italy." And
many, many more. Just send \$29.99
every month to "A Social Club
Christmas" P.O. Box 123, Brooklyn,
NY and nobody gets hurt. Is this a
good Christmas record? Elfin' A!

Harvey pokes his head in.

HARVEY
You get the Brooklyn chorus file?

DAVE
Yes. Very funny.

Dave starts packing away.

HARVEY
Where are you going?

DAVE
Home. I'm on call today.

HARVEY
We're going to brain storm over at
McAnn's now.

DAVE
Sorry. I'm minding the home front
tonight. The family's in the pageant.

HARVEY
Can't get a babysitter?

DAVE
The babysitters are in the pageant.

HARVEY
Neighbors?

DAVE
We hate our neighbors. Gotta go.

INT. KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Dave is trying to clean up the kitchen a bit, washing dishes.
It's closing in on midnight.

Carol comes in.

DAVE
Oh, you're home early. Or did the
auditorium burn down?

CAROL
Shut up.

She sees some papers on the table.

CAROL (CONT'D)
What's this?

DAVE
Your kids' report cards.

CAROL
What happened?

DAVE
What do you mean happened?

CAROL
Look at these incompletes. Eve is almost failing English and Math. Joonie's marks are terrible.

DAVE
When are they supposed to do projects? Homework? Study? Joonie had a science project due today. He did it on the effects of fake show on tinsel. Did you know that?

CAROL
So, that's why he needed that fake snow.

DAVE
We can't keep this up.

CAROL
It'll be over soon enough. Other people are doing it.

DAVE
And they're cracking up, too!

INT. SCHOOL'S GIRLS ROOM -- NIGHT

Someone's weeping. Over there, in one of the stalls.

INT. STALL -- CONTINUOUS

It's Carol. She's sitting on the bowl (not going), weeping, pulling out toilet paper to dry her eyes.

SHELLY (O.S.)
Carol?

Carol tries to pull herself together.

INT. SCHOOL'S GIRLS ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Shelly has her head poked in the door.

SHELLY
Carol?

CAROL (O.S.)
One second.

SHELLY
You okay in there?

CAROL
(curtly)
I'm fine.

INT. STALL -- CONTINUOUS

She tries to clean up. She starts to open the door, then decides to flush the toilet. She steps out.

INT. SCHOOL'S GIRLS ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

SHELLY
(fine, be that way)
We're ready to go.

CAROL
Good. Good.

INT. AUDITORIUM -- EVENING

Carol is in the seats.

CAROL
Okay, people, let's run the second act straight through this time. Pretend it's show time. Curtains up. Light the lights!

INT. STAGE -- CONTINUOUS

The curtain comes up on the Nativity Carol Opera, everyone singing their bits of carols. Off to the side are some shepherds. Some Roman shouldered march past.

SHEPHERDS
Oh come, oh come, Emmanuel.
And ransom captive Israel.
That mourns in lonely exile here.
Until the Son of God appear.

The Shepherds lay down to sleep.

CHOIR
Oh little town of Bethlehem.
How still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep.
The silent stars go by.

An ANGEL comes out.

ANGEL
Silent night, holy night.
All is calm, all is bright.

Lights up on the stable with the Virgin Mary and Joseph.

VIRGIN MARY

Away in a manger.

JOSEPH

No crib for his bed.

VIRGIN MARY

The little Lord Jesus laid down his
sweet head.

Angel goes to Shepherds and wakes them. Lo, they are afraid.

ANGEL

God rest you merry gentlemen, let
nothing you dismay.

SHEPHERDS

Do you hear what I hear?

ANGEL

The first Nowell--

CHOIR

Silent night--

ANGEL

The angel did say---

CHOIR

Holy night---

ANGEL

Was to certain poor shepherds in
fields as they lay.

CHOIR

Shepherds quake at the sight.

SHEPHERDS

In fields where we lay, keeping our
sheep.
On a cold winter's night that was so
deep.

ANGEL

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her king.
Let every heart prepare Him room.
And heaven and nature sing!
And heaven and nature sing!
And heaven and nature sing!

SHEPHERDS

Alleluia! Alleluia!

SHEPHERD 2

(to others)

Angels we have heard on high!

SHEPHERD 1

Sweetly singing o'er the plains!

SHEPHERD 2

And the mountains in reply.

CHOIR

Echo back the joyous strain.

SHEPHERD 1

Alleluia!

OTHERS

Gloria in excelsis Deo! Gloria in
excelsis Deo!

INT. BACKSTAGE -- CONTINUOUS

Joonie is sweeping, with Joe and Harry.

JOONIE

(singing)

Gloria! Gloria! You think you're
gonna run now!

Stage manager hushes him.

INT. STAGE -- CONTINUOUS

Some SHOPKEEPERS enter.

SHOPKEEP 1

Do yo hear what I hear?

SHOPKEEP 2

Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why
your joyous strain prolong?
Say what may the tidings be which
inspire your heav'nly song?

SHEPHERDS

A child, a child, shivers in the
night,
He will bring us goodness and light!
He will bring us goodness and light!

CHOIR

Gloria in excelsis Deo! Gloria in
excelsis Deo!

INT. BACKSTAGE -- CONTINUOUS

Joonie and the guys dancing around.

JOONIE

Day-o! It's a day, it's a day, it's
a day-o! Sunset come and we want to
go home.

Stage manager hushes him.

INT. STAGE -- CONTINUOUS

In the stable...

JOSEPH

'Round yon virgin, mother and child.
Holy infant so tender and mild.

The Christmas star is lowered over the stable.

CHOIR

The stars in the bright sky looked
down where he lay.
The little Lord Jesus asleep in the
hay.

Three Kings enter.

KINGS

We three kings of Orient are,
Bearing gifts we traverse afar.
Field and fountain, moor and mountain,
following yonder star.

KING 1

What child is this, who laid to rest
on Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,
while shepherds watch are keeping?

ALL

This, this is Christ the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing.
Haste! Haste! To bring him laud,
the babe the son of Mary!

DRUMMER BOY

I have no gift to bring, ba-rump-ba-
ba-rump.

ANGEL

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and
triumph!

KING 1

Hark! The herald angels sing!

ANGEL

O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem.

SHEPHERD 1

Glory to the new born king!

ANGEL

Come and behold him, born the king
of angels.

SHEPHERD 2

Peace on earth and mercy mild.
God and sinners reconciled.

ANGEL

Venite adoremus, venite adoremus.

ALL

Joyful all ye nations rise,
Join the triumph of the skies.

ANGEL

Venite adoremus, Dominum.

SHEPHERD 1

O tidings of comfort and joy.

SHOPKEEP 1

Comfort and joy.

ALL

O tidings of comfort and joy!

Lights dim on stage, as lone spot light hits the baby Jesus.

Carol is in the dark. She has nodded off. She realizes the number's finished and snaps to.

CAROL

Very good, people, very good. Let's
take it from the top.

SHELLY

It's getting late.

CAROL

There's only a day left. And we
need to run it again.

The actors unenthusiastically exit the stage.

EXT. MINELLI HOUSE -- NIGHT

Eve and Joonie exit, bundled up. Dave, holding Louise, walks
Carol to the front door.

CAROL

Okay, the show starts at eight.
Tickets are on the microwave.

(MORE)

CAROL (CONT'D)

You should get there early to get a good seat. Remember the camcorder, it's all charged. This is it, opening night. Wish us luck.

DAVE

Good luck, guys.

CAROL

Come on, get in the car, we're late!
Late!

They leave.

DAVE

I'm almost as excited as if it were closing night.

FADE OUT

FADE IN:

EXT. MINELLI HOUSE -- LATER

Dave exits with Louise, both bundled up. They go to the car at the curb in it's dug-out snow pit. After strapping Louise in, he pulls the car out of the spot and drives off.

A few moments later, the sedan pulls up then pulls into Dave's snow spot.

The DRIVER gets out and starts to walk off.

EXT. STREET -- CONTINUOUS

Dave is stopped at the end of the block. He looks in his rear view mirror. He flashes his lights. A snow plow drives up. Dave slips the DRIVER some cash. The plow heads down the block.

EXT. MINELLI HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

The plow passes the spot, effectively plowing the sedan in and under a wall of snow.

The Driver sees this and drops to his knees, yelling a Khan-like:

DRIVER

No!

INT. CAR -- CONTINUOUS

Dave smirks.

DAVE

He wants the spot, he can have it
'til spring.

EXT. AUDITORIUM -- NIGHT

It's opening night, cars are parking in the church lot and making their way to the entrance.

INT. LOBBY -- NIGHT

The doors to the auditorium are opened and the PEOPLE are milling about. Some yelling is heard.

INT. AUDITORIUM -- EVENING

The audience is slowing filing in. Carol walks down the aisle, getting peppered by questions and problems as she reaches the stage.

FRAN

Katie has strep throat!

CAROL

What?

FATHER RON

The building inspector was here again.
He was very relieved to see the
receipt for the new burner.

CAROL

That's what it's all about, relieving
people.

JANET

I forgot, did you want me with
pigtails or a ponytail?

CAROL

Whatever.

MRS. MACDONALD

I'm happy to see you've kept your
end of the bargain.

She goes onstage and ducks behind the curtain.

INT. STAGE SET -- NIGHT

Carol gets behind the curtain and slumps down. She looks up and sees the children in mice costumes practicing their prancing with Eve. It's very sloppy. Carol snaps.

CAROL

You call that prancing?

(MORE)

CAROL (CONT'D)

I go out of my way to include you in my play, all you have to do is prance across the stage and it looks like you're going to math class or something. The show starts in just a few minutes and I will not have all my work and effort ruined!

EVE

Mom?

The cast and Shelly filter in to witness the tirade. They are stunned and angry. This is the last straw.

SHELLY

Carol--

CAROL

One second.

EVE

Mom--

CAROL

Do you see me talking here?

The little kids burst into tears and run off. Carol looks up and sees the cast standing around her.

CAROL (CONT'D)

What are you doing? We have a show to do! Places, people!

SISSY

I think not director Bligh.

CAROL

Mary, you're the big opening act, just like Grandma wanted, take your spot in front of the tree and show them what the family's money can do!

Mary looks mortified and runs off.

SHELLY

Carol, get a grip.

A GRIP, a kid, comes over carrying some wire and a ladder.

CAROL

I don't need a grip!

The Grip leaves.

CAROL (CONT'D)
I need everyone to take direction
and obey me!

The kids and players walk off. Eve and Shelly are left.

CAROL (CONT'D)
You want the solo now?

Eve runs off. Shelly hands her a remote control.

CAROL (CONT'D)
Where are you going?

SHELLY
Somewhere Christmas-y.

CAROL
You have to do the music.

SHELLY
Just hit "play."

The players are gone. The stage crew drop their items and leave.

CAROL
Where are you all going? Come back
here!

She kicks a tall candy cane. It falls into the tree, causing a chain reaction of sets and back drops to collapse and fall.

Carol now looks on in horror as all her hard work crumbles around her. All she can do is turn in a circle, following the wreckage.

The family ornament drops off the tree and amazingly doesn't break. It rolls up to Carol's feet. Carol looks confused, relieved, stressed. Then a scenery flat falls and smashes it. Carol is stunned by this more than anything else.

A falling back drop tangles the curtain rope and the curtain slides open.

INT. AUDITORIUM -- NIGHT

The curtains part to a full house. There is applause.

Dave comes in late, carrying Louise. He's checking his watch, looking perplexed.

DAVE
We're late. He's going to kill me.
A fine Christmas this'll be with me
dead.

He fumbles to get Louise down, get the camcorder out and start video taping.

INT. LIGHTING BOOTH -- NIGHT

It's Joonie at the spot light, reading a comic. REGGIE is in there as well. Joonie hears the applause and is caught off guard.

JOONIE

Reggie, they're starting! Power up!

He gets to the spot light, turns it on and points it at the stage.

Eve comes into the booth.

EVE

Come on, Joonie, we're going.

JOONIE

What? Who's going? We're starting!

EVE

How? We all just left!

Eve goes to the booth window.

INT. STAGE SET -- NIGHT

The spot hits Carol in the middle of the wreckage. She suddenly turns, now aware that she's on stage. She looks at the audience. They're kind of baffled. Fr. Ron is in the front row and gives a supportive thumbs up.

CAROL

Oh my God, what have I done?
(trying to gather her
wits)

Good evening, everyone. And merry
Christmas.

Audience is in the spirit.

AUDIENCE

Merry Christmas!

Mrs. MacDonald frantically leafs through the program, wondering why Mary isn't opening the show.

CAROL

Thank you. I wish I deserved it.
Christmas is supposed to be a joyous
time. It's a celebration, after
all. The birth of our Savior, the
embodiment of God and hope.

(MORE)

CAROL (CONT'D)

Literally. I so wanted this show to do that. To be part of a celebration of what is good and special about the holidays. I love Christmas time. I have since I was a child. I just wanted to share.

INT. BACKSTAGE -- CONTINUOUS

By the exits, members of the cast and crew stop to listen.

CAROL

Instead of sharing, I started scaring. A lot of us get wrapped up in the trappings of the holiday and forget what's at the heart of the holiday, the holy day. And I must confess...

(turning to Fr. Ron)

In every sense of the word, that I have done just that.

INT. LIGHTING BOOTH -- NIGHT

Eve watches her mother, her pain evident.

CAROL

I forgot myself. I forgot Christmas. Instead I put my effort into this; cardboard and tinsel, a red and green facade of Christmas and I alienated a lot of wonderful people in the process.

MRS. MACDONALD

(standing)

I knew it! You've ruined the show! You're ruined Christmas.

CAROL

I tried to make it better. And I did. For a while. Maybe I wasn't the right person; but at least I tried.

MRS. MACDONALD

Then where is my granddaughter? And her song?

(blurting)

We had an agreement.

CAROL

You'll get your money back. Somehow I'll repay you.

Everyone looks at MacDonald, who is realizing she may have said too much. Dave turns his camera on MacDonald.

DAVE

Oooh, juicy.

INT. LIGHTING BOOTH -- CONTINUOUS

Eve quickly exits.

JOONIE

Reggie, take this, would ya?

Reggie takes the spot as Joonie hustles out.

INT. STAGE -- CONTINUOUS

CAROL

I'm sorry. I am so very sorry. To all of you. You came here expecting to have your spirits lifted and instead, I trampled on them. I apologize to you. I apologize to the cast. And the crew. And I apologize to my family. Especially my daughter. I wronged her and for that I am sorry. If you'll just go to the box office, I'll see that you all get refunds.

EVE

Mom, I didn't mean it.

Carol turns to her. Suddenly, the piano starts playing.

They look.

INT. AUDITORIUM -- CONTINUOUS

Dave has made his way to the upright piano and his playing his Christmas song. Shelly is holding Louise. He nods to Eve.

INT. STAGE -- CONTINUOUS

The spotlight hits Eve as she begins singing Dave's song, loud and clear.

Joonie starts playing his guitar.

Carol's brought to tears. As she reaches the chorus of the song.

Then other members of the choir and cast start wandering up on stage, joining in.

INT. BACKSTAGE -- NIGHT

Mary, all annoyed, stamps her foot and leaves.

INT. STAGE SET -- NIGHT

The kids, all in various stages of costume and street clothes are now hitting their stride. Joe, Harry and Lars unpack their instruments and join in.

Carol is overcome with joy at the spontaneous happening.

They finish. Eve and Carol hug. Applause.

Shelly pulls out some sheet music and puts it out for Dave.

SHELLY

Here, play this. You'll get a kick
out of it.

Dave sees Joonie's name on the music and smiles. He starts playing the song and the cast joins in.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT. AUDITORIUM -- LATER

The stage is deserted, the audience gone. Carol comes out and looks at the mess. Dave wanders out with a fast food bucket and drinks.

DAVE

Hungry?

CAROL

Yeah.

DAVE

Some opening night.

CAROL

I'm lucky they didn't lynch me.

DAVE

Tomorrow?

CAROL

I guess we fix this and put on the
real show. After I make sure it's
okay with everyone.

DAVE

Let me know if you need any help.
Thirsty?

CAROL

What do you have?

DAVE

I have green coke or red diet 7-Up.
Festive, no?

She hugs him and takes a piece of chicken. Fr. Ron comes out.

FATHER RON

Quite a show, Carol.

CAROL

It'll be okay tomorrow, Father. I promise. I'm so sorry, I ruined everything.

FATHER RON

Did you? Service to the Lord is never easy and I think you're the better for it. It was the Christmas spirit at work here tonight. It truly was.

CAROL

If there's anything I can do to make it up to you---

FATHER RON

Well, we do have the Easter Passion Plays to put on...

Oh-oh!

The End